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THE Complete Works of EDGAR ALLAN POE

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In Six Volumes
Volume VI.

Boston and New York
Colonial Press Company
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RICHARD ADAMS LOCKE.

About twelve years ago, I think, *The New York Sun*, a daily paper, price one penny, was established in the city of New York by Mr. Moses Y. Beach, who engaged Mr. RICHARD ADAMS LOCKE as its editor. In a well-written prospectus, the object of the journal professed to be that of "supplying the public with the news of the day at so cheap a rate as to lie within the means of all." The consequences of the scheme, in their influence on the whole newspaper business of the country, and through this business on the interests of the country at large, are probably beyond all calculation.

Previous to *The Sun*, there had been an unsuccessful attempt at publishing a penny paper in New York, and *The Sun* itself was originally projected and for a short time issued by Messrs. Day & Wisner; its *establishment*, however, is altogether due to Mr. Beach, who purchased it of its disheartened originators. The first decided *movement* of the journal, nevertheless, is to be attributed to Mr. Locke; and in so saying, I by no means intend any depreciation of Mr. Beach, since in the engagement of

Mr. L. he had but given one of the earliest instances of that unusual sagacity for which I am inclined to yield him credit.

At all events, *The Sun* was revolving in a comparatively narrow orbit when, one fine day, there appeared in its editorial columns a prefatory article announcing very remarkable astronomical discoveries made at the Cape of Good Hope by Sir John Herschell. The information was said to have been received by *The Sun* from an early copy of *The Edinburgh Journal of Science*, in which appeared a communication from Sir John himself. This preparatory announcement took very well, (there had been no hoaxes in those days,) and was followed by full details of the reputed discoveries, which were now found to have been made chiefly in respect to the moon, and by means of a telescope to which the one lately constructed by the Earl of Rosse is a plaything. As these discoveries were gradually spread before the public, the astonishment of that public grew out of all bounds; but those who questioned the veracity of *The Sun*—the authenticity of the communication to *The Edinburgh Journal of Science*—were really very few indeed; and this I am forced to look upon as a far more wonderful thing than any "man-bat" of them all.

About six months before this occurrence, the Harpers had issued an American edition of Sir John Herschell's "Treatise on Astronomy," and I had been much interested in what is there said respecting the possibility of

future lunar investigations. The theme excited my fancy, and I longed to give free rein to it in depicting my day-dreams about the scenery of the moon—in short, I longed to write a story embodying these dreams. The obvious difficulty, of course, was that of accounting for the narrator's acquaintance with the satellite; and the equally obvious mode of surmounting the difficulty was the supposition of an extraordinary telescope. I saw at once that the chief interest of such a narrative must depend upon the reader's yielding his credence in some measure as to details of actual fact. At this stage of my deliberations, I spoke of the design to one or two friends—to Mr. John P. Kennedy, the author of "Swallow Barn," among others,—and the result of my conversations with them was that the optical difficulties of constructing such a telescope as I conceived were so rigid and so commonly understood, that it would be in vain to attempt giving due verisimilitude to any fiction having the telescope as a basis. Reluctantly, therefore, and only half convinced, (believing the public, in fact, more readily gullible than did my friends,) I gave up the idea of imparting very close verisimilitude to what I should write—that is to say, so close as really to deceive. I fell back upon a style half plausible, half bantering, and resolved to give what interest I could to an actual passage from the earth to the moon, describing the lunar scenery as if surveyed and personally examined by the narrator. In this view I wrote a story which I called "Hans Pfaall," publishing it about six

months afterward in *The Southern Literary Messenger*, of which I was then editor.

It was three weeks after the issue of *The Messenger* containing "Hans Pfaall," that the first of the *Moon-hoax* editorials made its appearance in *The Sun*, and no sooner had I seen the paper than I understood the jest, which not for a moment could I doubt had been suggested by my own *jeu d'esprit*. Some of the New York journals (*The Transcript* among others) saw the matter in the same light, and published the "Moon Story" side by side with "Hans Pfaall," thinking that the author of the one had been detected in the author of the other. Although the details are, with some exception, very dissimilar, still I maintain that the general features of the two compositions are nearly identical. Both are *hoaxes* (although one is in a *tone* of mere banter, the other of downright earnest); both hoaxes are on one subject, astronomy; both on the same point of that subject, the moon; both professed to have derived exclusive information from a foreign country; and both attempt to give plausibility by minuteness of scientific detail. Add to all this, that nothing of a similar nature had ever been attempted before these two hoaxes, the one of which followed immediately upon the heels of the other.

Having stated the case, however, in this form, I am bound to do Mr. Locke the justice to say that he denies having seen my article prior to the publication of his own; I am bound to add, also, that I believe him.

Immediately on the completion of the "Moon Story" (it was three or four days in getting finished), I wrote an examination of its claims to credit, showing distinctly its fictitious character, but was astonished at finding that I could obtain few listeners, so really eager were all to be deceived, so magical were the charms of a style that served as the vehicle of an exceedingly clumsy invention.

It may afford even now some amusement to see pointed out those particulars of the hoax which should have sufficed to establish its real character. Indeed, however rich the imagination displayed in this fiction, it wanted much of the force which might have been given it by a more scrupulous attention to general analogy and to fact. That the public were misled, even for an instant, merely proves the gross ignorance which (ten or twelve years ago) was so prevalent on astronomical topics.

The moon's distance from the earth is, in round numbers, 240,000 miles. If we wish to ascertain how near, apparently, a lens would bring the satellite, (or any distant object,) we, of course, have but to divide the distance by the magnifying, or, more strictly, by the space-penetrating power of the glass. Mr. Locke gives his lens a power of 42,000 times. By this divide 240,000 (the moon's real distance), and we have five miles and five sevenths as the apparent distance. No animal could be seen so far, much less the minute points particularized in the story. Mr. L. speaks about Sir John Herschell's perceiving flowers, (the *papaver Rheas*, etc.), and even detecting the color and the

shape of the eye of small birds. Shortly before, too, the author himself observes that the lens would not render perceptible objects less than eighteen inches in diameter; but even this, as I have said, is giving the glass far too great a power.

On page 18 (of the pamphlet edition), speaking of "a hairy veil" over the eyes of a species of bison, Mr. L. says: "It immediately occurred to the acute mind of Doctor Herschell that this was a providential contrivance to protect the eyes of the animal from the great extremes of light and darkness to which all the inhabitants of our side of the moon are periodically subjected." But this should not be thought a very "acute" observation of the Doctor's. The inhabitants of our side of the moon have, evidently, no darkness at all; in the absence of the sun they have a light from the earth equal to that of thirteen full moons, so that there can be nothing of the extremes mentioned.

The topography throughout, even when professing to accord with Blunt's Lunar Chart, is at variance with that and all other lunar charts, and even at variance with itself. The points of the compass, too, are in sad confusion; the writer seeming to be unaware that, on a lunar map, these are not in accordance with terrestrial points—the east being to the left, and so forth.

Deceived, perhaps, by the vague titles *Mare Nubium*, *Mare Tranquillitatis*, *Mare Fœcunditatis*, etc., given by astronomers of former times to the dark patches on the

moon's surface, Mr. L. has long details respecting oceans and other large bodies of water in the moon; whereas there is no astronomical point more positively ascertained than that no such bodies exist there. In examining the boundary between light and darkness in a crescent or gibbous moon, where this boundary crosses any of the dark places, the line of division is found to be jagged; but were these dark places liquid they would evidently be even.

The description of the wings of the man-bat (on page 21) is but a literal copy of Peter Wilkins' account of the wings of his flying islanders. This simple fact should at least have induced suspicion.

On page 23 we read thus: "What a prodigious influence must our thirteen times larger globe have exercised upon this satellite when an embryo in the womb of time, the passive subject of chemical affinity!" Now, this is very fine; but it should be observed that no astronomer could have made such remark, especially to any *Journal of Science*, for the earth in the sense intended (that of bulk) is not only thirteen but forty-nine times *larger* than the moon. A similar objection applies to the five or six concluding pages of the pamphlet, where, by way of introduction to some discoveries in Saturn, the philosophical correspondent is made to give a minute school-boy account of that planet—an account quite supererogatory, it might be presumed, in the case of *The Edinburgh Journal of Science.*

But there is one point, in especial, which should have instantly betrayed the fiction. Let us imagine the power really possessed of seeing animals on the moon's surface —what in such case would first arrest the attention of an observer from the earth? Certainly neither the shape, size, nor any other peculiarity in these animals so soon as their remarkable *position*—they would seem to be walking heels up and head down, after the fashion of flies on a ceiling. The real observer (however prepared by previous knowledge) would have commented on this odd phenomenon before proceeding to other details; the fictitious observer has not even alluded to the subject, but in the case of the man-bats speaks of seeing their entire bodies, when it is demonstrable that he could have seen little more than the apparently flat hemisphere of the head.

I may as well observe, in conclusion, that the size, and especially the powers of the man-bats (for example, their ability to fly in so rare an atmosphere—if, indeed, the moon has any), with most of the other fancies in regard to animal and vegetable existence, are at variance generally with all analogical reasoning on these themes, and that analogy here will often amount to the most positive demonstration. The temperature of the moon, for instance, is rather above that of boiling water, and Mr. Locke, consequently, has committed a serious oversight in not representing his man-bats, his bisons, his game of all kinds—to say nothing of his vegetables—as each and all done to a turn.

It is, perhaps, scarcely necessary to add, that all the suggestions attributed to Brewster and Herschell in the beginning of the hoax, about the "transfusion of artificial light through the focal object of vision," etc., etc., belong to that species of figurative writing which comes most properly under the head of rigmarole. There is a real and very definite limit to optical discovery among the stars, a limit whose nature need only be stated to be understood. If, indeed, the casting of large lenses were all that is required, the ingenuity of man would ultimately prove equal to the task, and we might have them of any size demanded *; but, unhappily, in proportion to the increase of size in the lens, and consequently of space-penetrating power, is the diminution of light from the object by diffusion of the rays. And for this evil there is no remedy within human reach; for an object is seen by means of that light alone, whether direct or reflected, which proceeds from the object itself. Thus the only artificial light which could avail Mr. Locke would be such as he should be able to throw, not upon "the focal object of vision," but upon *the moon*. It has been easily calculated that when the light proceeding from a heavenly body becomes so diffused as to be as weak as the natural light given out by the stars collectively in a clear, moonless night, then

* Neither of the Herschells dreamed of the possibility of a speculum six feet in diameter, and now the marvel has been triumphantly accomplished by Lord Rosse. There is, in fact, no physical *impossibility* in our casting lenses of even fifty feet diameter or more. A sufficiency of means and *skill* is all that is demanded.

the heavenly body for any practical purpose is no longer visible.

The singular blunders to which I have referred being properly understood, we shall have all the better reason for wonder at the prodigious *success* of the hoax. Not one person in ten discredited it, and (strangest point of all!) the doubters were chiefly those who doubted without being able to say why—the ignorant, those uninformed in astronomy, people who *would not* believe because the thing was so novel, so entirely "out of the usual way." A grave professor of mathematics in a Virginian college told me seriously that he had *no doubt* of the truth of the whole affair! The great effect wrought upon the public mind is referable, first, to *the novelty of the idea;* secondly, to the fancy-exciting and reason-repressing character of the alleged discoveries; thirdly, to the consummate tact with which the deception was brought forth; fourthly, to the exquisite *vraisemblance* of the narration. The hoax was circulated to an immense extent, was translated into various languages—was even made the subject of (quizzical) discussion in astronomical societies; drew down upon itself the grave denunciation of Dick; and was, upon the whole, decidedly the greatest *hit* in the way of *sensation* —of merely popular sensation—ever made by any similar fiction either in America or in Europe.

Having read the "Moon Story" to an end, and found it anticipative of all the main points of my "Hans Pfaall," I suffered the latter to remain unfinished. The chief design

in carrying my hero to the moon was to afford him an opportunity of describing the lunar scenery, but I found that he could add very little to the minute and authentic account of Sir John Herschell. The first part of "Hans Pfaall," occupying about eighteen pages of *The Messeager*, embraced merely a journal of the passage between the two orbs, and a few words of general observation on the most obvious features of the satellite; the second part will most probably never appear. I did not think it advisable even to bring my voyager back to his parent earth. He remains where I left him, and is still, I believe, "the man in the moon."

From the epoch of the hoax *The Sun* shone with unmitigated splendor. The start thus given the paper insured it a triumph; it has now a daily circulation of not far from fifty thousand copies, and is, therefore, probably, the most really influential journal of its kind in the world. Its success firmly established "the penny system" throughout the country, and (*through The Sun*) consequently, we are indebted to the genius of Mr. Locke for one of the most important steps ever yet taken in the pathway of human progress.

On dissolving, about a year afterward, his connection with Mr. Beach, Mr. Locke established a political daily paper, *The New Era*, conducting it with distinguished ability. In this journal he made, very unwisely, an attempt at a second hoax, giving the *finale* of the adventures of Mungo Park in Africa—the writer pretending to have

come into possession, by some accident, of the lost MSS. of the traveller. No one, however, seemed to be deceived (Mr. Locke's columns were a suspected district), and the adventures were never brought to an end. They were richly imaginative.

The next point made by their author was the getting up a book on magnetism as the *primum mobile* of the universe, in connection with Dr. Sherwood, the practitioner of magnetic remedies. The more immediate purpose of the treatise was the setting forth a new magnetic method of obtaining the longitude. The matter was brought before Congress and received with favorable attention. What definite action was had I know not. A review of the work appeared in *The Army and Navy Chronicle*, and made sad havoc of the whole project. It was enabled to do this, however, by attacking in detail the accuracy of some calculations of no very radical importance. These and others Mr. Locke is now engaged in carefully revising; and my own opinion is that his theory (which he has reached more by dint of imagination than of any thing else) will finally be established, although, perhaps, never thoroughly by *him*.

His prose style is noticeable for its concision, luminousness, completeness—each quality in its proper place. He has that *method* so generally characteristic of genius proper. Every thing he writes is a model in its peculiar way, serving just the purposes intended and nothing to spare. He has written some poetry, which, through certain radical misapprehensions, is not very good.

Like most men of *true* imagination, Mr. Locke is a seemingly paradoxical compound of coolness and excitability.

He is about five feet seven inches in height, symmetrically formed; there is an air of distinction about his whole person—the *air noble* of genius. His face is strongly pitted by the small-pox, and, perhaps from the same cause, there is a marked obliquity in the eyes; a certain calm, clear *luminousness*, however, about these latter, amply compensates for the defect, and the forehead is truly beautiful in its intellectuality. I am acquainted with no person possessing so fine a forehead as Mr. Locke. He is married, and about forty-five years of age, although no one would suppose him to be more than thirty-eight. He is a lineal descendant from the immortal author of the "Essay on the Human Understanding."

ELIZABETH OAKES SMITH.*

This is a very pretty little volume, neatly printed, handsomely bound, embracing some two hundred pages sixteen-mo, and introduced to the public, somewhat unnecessarily, in a preface by Dr. Rufus W. Griswold. In this preface we find some few memoranda of the personal authoress, with some critical opinions in relation to her poems. The memoranda are meagre. A much more in-

* "The Poetical Writings of Elizabeth Oakes Smith." First complete edition. New York, 1840.

teresting account of Mrs. SMITH is given by Mr. John Neal, and was included by Mr. John Keese in the introduction to a former collection of her works. The critical opinions may as well be here quoted, at least in part. Dr. Griswold says:

Seeking expression, yet shrinking from notoriety, and with a full share of that respect for a just fame and appreciation which belongs to every high-toned mind, yet oppressed by its shadow when circumstance is the impelling motive of publication, the writings of Mrs. Smith might well be supposed to betray great inequality; still in her many contributions to the magazines, it is remarkable how few of her pieces display the usual carelessness and haste of magazine articles. As an essayist especially, while graceful and lively, she is compact and vigorous; while through poems, essays, tales, and criticisms, (for her industrious pen seems equally skilful and happy in each of these departments of literature,) through all her manifold writings, indeed, there runs the same beautiful vein of philosophy, viz., that truth and goodness of themselves impart a holy light to the mind which gives it a power far above mere intellectuality; that the highest order of human intelligence springs from the moral and not the reasoning faculties. * * * Mrs. Smith's most popular poem is "The Acorn," which, though inferior in high inspiration to "The Sinless Child," is by many preferred for its happy play of fancy and proper finish. Her sonnets, of which she has written many, have not yet been as much admired as the "April Rain," "The Brook," and other fugitive pieces, which we find in many popular collections.

"The Sinless Child" was originally published in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, where it at once attracted much attention from the novelty of its conception and the general grace and purity of its style. Undoubtedly it is one of the most original of American poems—surpassed in this respect, we think, only by Maria del Occidente's "Bride of Seven." Of course, we speak merely of long poems. We have had in this country many brief fugitive pieces far excelling in this most important point (originality) either "The Bride of Seven" or "The Sinless Child"—far excelling, indeed, any transatlantic poems. After all, it is chiefly in works of what is absurdly termed "sustained effort" that we fall in any material respect behind our progenitors.

The "Sinless Child" is quite long, including more than two hundred stanzas, generally of eight lines. The metre throughout is iambic tetrameter, alternating with trimeter—in other words, lines of four iambuses alternate with lines of three. The variations from this order are rare. The design of the poem is very imperfectly made out. The conception is much better than the execution. "A simple cottage maiden, Eva, given to the world in the widowhood of one parent and the angelic existence of the other * * * is found from her birth to be as meek and gentle as are those pale flowers that look imploringly upon us. * * * She is gifted with the power of interpreting the beautiful mysteries of our earth. * * * For her the song of the bird is not merely the gushing forth of a na-

ture too full of blessedness to be silent * * * the humblest plant, the simplest insect, is each alive with truth. * * * She sees the world not merely with mortal eyes, but looks within to the pure internal life of which the outward is but a type," etc., etc. These passages are taken from the Argument prefixed to Part I. The general thesis of the poetess may, perhaps, be stated as the demonstration that the superior wisdom is moral rather than intellectual; but it may be doubted whether her subject was ever precisely apparent to herself. In a word, she seems to have vacillated between several conceptions—the only very definite idea being that of extreme beauty and purity in a child. At one time we fancy her, for example, attempting to show that the condition of absolute sanctity is one through which mortality may know all things and hold converse with the angels; at another we suppose it her purpose to "create" (in critical language) an entirely novel being, a something that is neither angel nor mortal, nor yet fairy in the ordinary sense—in a word, an original *ens*. Besides these two prominent fancies, however, there are various others which seem continually flitting in and out of the poet's vision, so that her whole work has an indeterminate air. Of this she apparently becomes conscious toward the conclusion, and in the final stanza endeavors to remedy the difficulty by summing up her design—

> The sinless child, with mission high,
> Awhile to earth was given,
> To show us that our world should be
> The vestibule of heaven.

Did we but in the holy light
Of truth and goodness rise,
We might communion hold with God
And spirits from the skies.

The conduct of the narrative is scarcely more determinate—if, indeed, "The Sinless Child" can be said to include a narrative at all. The poem is occupied in its first part with a description of the child, her saintly character, her lone wanderings, the lessons she deduces from all animal and vegetable things, and her communings with the angels. We have then discussions with her mother, who is made to introduce episodical tales, one of "Old Richard," another called "The Defrauded Heart" (a tale of a miser), and another entitled "The Stepmother." Toward the end of the poem a lover, Alfred Linne, is brought upon the scene. He has been reckless and sinful, but is reclaimed by the heavenly nature of Eva. He finds her sleeping in a forest. At this point occur some of the finest and most characteristic passages of the poem.

Unwonted thought, unwonted calm
Upon his spirit fell;
For he unwittingly had sought
Young Eva's hallowed dell,
And breathed that atmosphere of love,
Around her path that grew;
That evil from her steps repelled
The good unto her drew.

Mem.—The last quatrain of this stanza would have been more readily comprehended if punctuated and written thus—

And breathed that atmosphere of love
Around her path that grew—
That evil from her steps repelled—
That good unto her drew.

We may as well observe here, too, that although neatly printed, the volume abounds in typographical errors that very frequently mar the sense—as at page 66, for example, where *come* (near the bottom) is improperly used for *came*, and *scorching* (second line from the top) is substituted for *searching*. We proceed with Alfred's discovery of Eva in the wood.

Now Eva opes her child-like eyes
And lifts her tranquil head ;
And Albert, like a guilty thing,
Had from her presence fled.
But Eva marked his troubled brow,
His sad and thoughtful eyes,
As if they sought yet shrank to hold
Their converse with the skies.

Communion with the skies—would have been far better. It seems strange to us that any one should have overlooked the word.

And all her kindly nature stirred,
She prayed him to remain ;
Well conscious that the pure have power,
To balm much human pain.
There mingled too, as in a dream,
About brave Albert Linne,
A real and ideal form,
Her soul had formed within.

We give the punctuation here as we find it ;—it is incorrect throughout, interfering materially with a proper

understanding of the passage. There should be a comma after "And" in the first line, a comma in place of the semicolon at the end of the second line, no point at the end of the third line, a comma after "mingled," and none after "form." These seeming *minutiæ* are of real importance; but we refer to them, in the case of "The Sinless Child," because here the aggregate of this species of minor error is unusually remarkable. Of course it is the proof-reader or the editor, and not Mrs. Smith, who is to blame.

Her trusting hand fair Eva laid
In that of Albert Linne,
And for one trembling moment turned
Her gentle thoughts within.
Deep tenderness was in the glance
That rested on his face,
As if her woman-heart had found
Its own abiding-place.

And evermore to him it seemed
Her voice more liquid grew—
"Dear youth, thy soul and mine are one;
One source their being drew!
And they must mingle evermore—
Thy thoughts of love and me
Will, as a light, thy footsteps guide
To life and mystery."

There was a sadness in her tone,
But love unfathomed deep:
As from the centre of the soul
Where the divine may sleep;
Prophetic was the tone and look,
And Albert's noble heart
Sank with a strange foreboding dread
Lest Eva should depart.

And when she bent her timid eyes
As she beside him knelt,
The pressure of her sinless lips
Upon his brow he felt,
And all of earth and all of sin
Fled from her sainted side;
She, the pure virgin of the soul,
Ordained young Albert's bride.

It would, perhaps, have been out of keeping with the more obvious plan of the poem to make Eva really the bride of Albert. She does not wed him, but dies tranquilly in bed, soon after the spiritual union in the forest. "Eva," says the Argument of Part VII., "hath fulfilled her destiny. Material things can no farther minister to the growth of her spirit. That waking of the soul to its own deep mysteries—its oneness with another—has been accomplished. A human soul has been perfected." At this point the poem may be said to have its conclusion.

In looking back at its general plan, we cannot fail to see traces of high poetic capacity. The first point to be commended is the reach or aim of the poetess. She is evidently discontented with the bald routine of commonplace themes, and originality has been with her a principal object. In *all* cases of fictitious composition it should be the *first* object—by which we do not mean to say that it can ever be considered as the most important. But, *cæteris paribus*, every class of fiction is the better for originality; every writer is false to his own interest if he fails to avail himself, at the outset, of the effect which is certainly and invariably derivable from the great element, ***novelty***.

The execution of "The Sinless Child" is, as we have already said, inferior to its conception—that is, to its conception as it floated, rather than steadily existed, in the brain of the authoress. She enables us to see that she has very *narrowly missed* one of those happy "creations" which now and then immortalize the poet. With a good deal more of deliberate thought before putting pen to paper, with a good deal more of the constructive ability, and with more rigorous discipline in the minor merits of style, and of what is termed in the school-prospectuses, composition, Mrs. Smith would have made of "The Sinless Child" one of the best, if not the very best, of American poems. While speaking of the execution, or more properly, the conduct of the work, we may as well mention, first, the obviousness with which the stories introduced by Eva's mother are interpolated, or episodical; it is permitted every reader to see that they have no natural connection with the true theme; and, indeed, there can be no doubt that they were written long before the main narrative was projected. In the second place, we must allude to the artificiality of the *Arguments*, or introductory prose passages, prefacing each Part of the poem. Mrs. Smith had no sounder reason for employing them than Milton and the rest of the epicists had for employing them before. If it be said that they are necessary for the proper comprehension of a poem, we reply that this is saying nothing for *them*, but merely much against the poem which demands them as a necessity. Every work

of art should contain within itself all that is required for its own comprehension. An "argument" is but another form of the "This is an ox" subjoined to the portrait of an animal with horns. But in making these objections to the management of "The Sinless Child," we must not be understood as insisting upon them as at all material, in view of the lofty merit of originality—a merit which pervades and invigorates the whole work, and which, in our opinion, at least, is far, very far more than sufficient to compensate for every inartisticality of construction. A work of art may be admirably constructed, and yet be null as regards every essentiality of that truest art which is but the happiest development of nature; but no work of art can embody within itself a proper *originality* without giving the plainest manifestations of the creative spirit, or, in more common parlance, of *genius* in its author. The originality of "The Sinless Child" would cover a multitude of greater defects than Mrs. Smith ever committed, and must forever entitle it to the admiration and respect of every competent critic.

As regards detached passages, we think that the episode of "The Stepmother" may be fairly cited as the best in the poem.

> You speak of Hobert's second wife, a lofty dame and bold;
> I like not her forbidding air, and forehead high and cold.
> The orphans have no cause for grief; she dare not give it now,
> Though nothing but a ghostly fear her heart of pride could bow.
>
> One night the boy his mother called; they heard him weeping say:
> "Sweet mother, kiss poor Eddy's cheek and wipe his tears away."

Red grew the lady's brow with rage, and yet she feels a strife
Of anger and of terror, too, at thought of that dead wife.

Wild roars the wind; the lights burn blue; the watch-dog howls with fear;
Loud neighs the steed from out the stall. What form is gliding near?
No latch is raised, no step is heard. but a phantom fills the space—
A sheeted spectre from the dead, with cold and leaden face.

What boots it that no other eye beheld the shade appear?
The guilty lady's guilty soul beheld it plain and clear.
It slowly glides within the room and sadly looks around,
And, stooping, kissed her daughter's cheek with lips that gave no sound.

Then softly on the step-dame's arm she laid a death-cold hand,
Yet it hath scorched within the flesh like to a burning brand;
And gliding on with noiseless foot, o'er winding stair and hall,
She nears the chamber where is heard her infant's trembling call.

She smoothed the pillow where he lay, she warmly tucked the bed,
She wiped his tears and stroked the curls that clustered round his head.
The child, caressed, unknowing fear, hath nestled him to rest;
The mother folds her wings beside—the mother from the blest!

The metre of this episode has been altered from its original form, and, we think, improved by the alteration. Formerly, in place of four lines of seven iambuses, the stanza consisted of eight lines—a line of four iambuses alternating with one of three—a more ordinary and artificial, therefore a less desirable, arrangement. In the three last quatrains there is an awkward vacillation between the present and perfect tenses, as in the words "beheld," "glides," "kissed," "laid," "hath scorched," "smoothed," "wiped," "hath nestled," "folds." These petty objections, of course, will by no means interfere with the reader's appreciation of the episode, with his admiration

of its pathos, its delicacy, and its grace—we had almost forgotten to say of its pure and high imagination.

We proceed to cull from "The Sinless Child," a few brief but happy passages at random.

Gentle she was and full of love,
With voice exceeding sweet,
And eyes of dove-like tenderness
Where joy and sadness meet.

———

——— with calm and tranquil eye
That turned instinctively to seek
The blueness of the sky.

———

Bright missals from angelic throngs
In every bye-way left—
How were the earth of glory shorn
Were it of flowers bereft!

———

And wheresoe'er the weary heart
Turns in its dim despair,
The meek-eyed blossom upward looks,
Inviting it to prayer.

———

The very winds were hushed to peace
Within the quiet dell,
Or murmured through the rustling bough
Like breathings of a shell.

———

The mystery of life;
Its many hopes, its many fears,
Its sorrow and its strife—
A spirit to behold in all
To guide, admonish, cheer,—
Forever, in all time and place,
To feel an angel near.

———

I may not scorn the spirit's rights
For I have seen it rise,
All written o'er with thought, thought, thought,
As with a thousand eyes.

And there are things that blight the soul
As with a mildew blight,
And in the temple of the Lord
Put out the blessed light.

It is in the *point* of passages such as these, in their vigor, terseness and novelty, combined with exquisite delicacy, that the more obvious merit of the poem consists. A thousand such *quotable* paragraphs are interspersed through the work, and of themselves would be sufficient to insure its popularity. But we repeat that a far loftier excellence lies *perdu* amid the minor deficiencies of "The Sinless Child."

The other poems of the volume are, as entire compositions, nearer perfection, but, in general, have less of the true poetical element. "The Acorn" is perfect as regards its construction—although, to be sure, the design is so simple that it could scarcely be marred in its execution. The idea is the old one of detailing the progress of a plant from its germ to its maturity, with the uses and general vicissitudes to which it is subjected. In this case of the acorn the vicissitudes are well imagined, and the execution is more skilfully managed—is more definite, vigorous and pronounced, than in the longer poem. The chief of the minor objections is to the rhythm, which is imperfect, vacillating awkwardly between iambuses and anapæsts, after

such fashion that it is impossible to decide whether the rhythm in itself—that is, whether the general intention is anapæstical or iambic. Anapæsts introduced, for the relief of monotone, into an iambic rhythm, are not only admissible but commendable, if not absolutely demanded; but in this case they prevail to such an extent as to overpower the iambic intention, thus rendering the whole versification difficult of comprehension. We give, by way of example, a stanza with the scanning divisions and quantities:

They came | with gifts | that should life | bestow; |
The dew | and the li | ving air— |
The bane | that should work | its dead | ly woe, |
The lit | tle men | had there; |
In the gray | moss cup | was the mil | dew brought, |
The worm | in a rose- | leaf rolled, |
And ma | ny things | with destruc | tion fraught |
That its doom | were quick | ly told. |

Here iambuses and anapæsts are so nearly balanced that the ear hesitates to receive the rhythm as either anapæstic or iambic—that is, it hesitates to receive it as any thing at all. A rhythm should always be distinctly marked by its first foot—that is to say, if the design is iambic, we should commence with an unmistakable iambus, and proceed with this foot until the ear gets fairly accustomed to it before we attempt variation; for which, indeed, there is no *necessity* unless for the relief of monotone. When the rhythm is in this manner thoroughly recognized, we may

sparingly vary with anapæsts (or if the rhythm be trochaic, with dactyls). Spondees, still more sparingly, as absolute discords, may be also introduced either in an iambic or trochaic rhythm. In common with a very large majority of American and, indeed, of European poets, Mrs. Smith seems to be totally unacquainted with the principles of versification—by which, of course, we mean its *rationale*. Of technical *rules* on the subject there are rather more than enough in our prosodies, and from these abundant rules are deduced the abundant blunders of our poets. There is not a prosody in existence which is worth the paper on which it is printed.

Of the miscellaneous poems included in the volume before us, we greatly prefer "The Summons Answered." It has more of *power*, more of genuine imagination than any thing written by its author. It is the story of three "bacchanals," who, on their way from the scene of their revelry, are arrested by the beckoning of a white hand from the partially unclosing door of a tomb. One of the party obeys the summons. It is the tomb of his wife. We quote the two concluding stanzas:

This restless life with its little fears,
  Its hopes that fade so soon,
With its yearning tenderness and tears,
And the burning agony that sears—
  The sun gone down at noon—
The spirit crushed to its prison wall,
  Mindless of all beside,—
This young Richard saw, and felt it all—
  Well might the dead abide!

The crimson light in the east is high,
The hoar-frost coldly gleams,
And Richard, chilled to the heart wellnigh,
Hath raised his wildered and bloodshot eye
From that long night of dreams.
He shudders to think of the reckless band
And the fearful oath he swore—
But most he thinks of the clay-cold hand,
That opened the old tomb door.

With the quotation of these really noble passages—noble, because full of the truest poetic energy—we take leave of the fair authoress. She is entitled, beyond doubt, to all, and perhaps to much more than, the commendation she has received. Her faults are among the peccadilloes, and her merits among the sterling excellencies of the muse.

J. G. C. BRAINARD.

AMONG all the *pioneers* of American literature, whether prose or poetical, there is *not one* whose productions have not been much overrated by his countrymen. But this fact is more especially obvious in respect to such of these pioneers as are no longer living,—nor is it a fact of so deeply transcendental a nature as only to be accounted for by the Emersons and Alcotts. In the first place, we have but to consider that gratitude, surprise, and a species of hyper-patriotic triumph have been blended and finally confounded with mere admiration, or appreciation, in respect to the labors of our earlier writers; and, in the second place, that Death has thrown his customary veil

of the sacred over these commingled feelings, forbidding them, in a measure, to be *now* separated or subjected to analysis. "In speaking of the deceased," says that excellent old English Moralist, James Puckle, in his "Gray Cap for a Green Head," "so fold up your discourse that their virtues may be outwardly shown, while their vices are wrapped up in silence." And with somewhat too inconsiderate a promptitude have we followed the spirit of this quaint advice. The mass of American readers have been, hitherto, in no frame of mind to view with calmness and to discuss with discrimination the true claims of the few who were *first* in convincing the mother country that her sons were not all brainless, as, in the plenitude of her arrogance, she, at one period, half affected and half wished to believe; and where any of these few have departed from among us, the difficulty of bringing their pretensions to the test of a proper criticism has been enhanced in a very remarkable degree. But even as concerns the living: is there any one so blind as not to see that Mr. Cooper, for example, owes much, and that Mr. Paulding owes *all* of his reputation as a novelist to his early occupation of the field? Is there any one so dull as not to know that fictions which neither Mr. Paulding nor Mr. Cooper *could* have written, are daily published by native authors without attracting more of commendation than can be crammed into a hack newspaper paragraph? And, again, is there any one so prejudiced as not to acknowledge that all this is because there

is no longer reason or wit in the query: "Who reads an American book?"? It is not because we lack the talent in which the days of Mr. Paulding exulted, but because such talent has shown itself to be common. It is not because we have *no* Mr. Coopers, but because it has been demonstrated that we might, at any moment, have as many Mr. Coopers as we please. In fact we are now strong in our own resources. We have, at length, arrived at that epoch when our literature may and must stand on its own merits, or fall through its own defects. We have snapped asunder the leading-strings of our British Grandmamma, and, better still, we have survived the first hours of our novel freedom,—the first licentious hours of a hobbledehoy braggadocio and swagger. *At last*, then, we are in a condition to be criticized—even more, to be neglected; and the journalist is no longer in danger of being impeached for *lèse majesté* of the Democratic Spirit, who shall assert, with sufficient humility, that we have committed an error in mistaking "Kettell's Specimens" for the Pentateuch, or Joseph Rodman Drake for Apollo.

The case of this latter gentleman is one which well illustrates what we have been saying. We believe it was about 1835 that Mr. Dearborn republished the "Culprit Fay," which then, as at the period of its original issue, was belauded by the universal American press, in a manner which must have apppeared ludicrous—not to speak *very* plainly—in the eyes of all unprejudiced observers. With a curiosity much excited by comments at once so

grandiloquent and so general, we procured and read the poem. What we found it we ventured to express distinctly, and at some length, in the pages of *The Southern Messenger*. It is a well-versified and sufficiently fluent composition, without high merit of any kind. Its defects are gross and superabundant. Its plot and conduct, considered in reference to its scene, are absurd. Its originality is none at all. Its imagination (and this was the great feature insisted upon by its admirers) is but a "counterfeit presentment,"—but the shadow of the shade of that lofty quality which is, in fact, the soul of the Poetic Sentiment—but a drivelling *effort to be fanciful*—an effort resulting in a species of hop-skip-and-go-merry rhodomontade, which the uninitiated feel it a duty to call ideality, and to admire as such, while lost in surprise at the impossibility of performing at least the latter half of the duty with any thing like satisfaction to themselves. And all this we not only asserted, but without difficulty *proved*. Dr. Drake has written some beautiful poems, but the "Culprit Fay," is not of them. We neither expected to hear any dissent from our opinions, nor did we hear any. On the contrary, the approving voice of every critic in the country whose *dictum* we had been accustomed to respect, was to us a sufficient assurance that we had not been very grossly in the wrong. In fact the public taste was then *approaching* the right. The truth indeed had not, as yet, made itself heard; but we had reached a point at which it had but to be plainly and boldly *put*, to be, at least, tacitly admitted.

This habit of apotheosizing our literary pioneers was a most indiscriminating one. Upon *all* who wrote, the applause was plastered with an impartiality really refreshing. Of course, the system favored the dunces at the expense of true merit! and, since there existed a certain fixed standard of exaggerated commendation to which all were adapted after the fashion of Procrustes, it is clear that the most meritorious required *the least stretching*,—in other words, that although all were much overrated, the deserving were overrated in a less degree than the unworthy. Thus with Brainard:—a man of indisputable genius, who, in any more discriminate system of panegyric, would have been long ago bepuffed into Demi-Deism; for if "M'Fingal," for example, is in reality what we have been told, the commentators upon Trumbull, as a matter of the simplest consistency, should have exalted into the seventh heaven of poetical dominion the author of the many graceful and vigorous effusions which are now lying, in a very neat little volume, before us.*

Yet we maintain that even these effusions have been over-praised, and materially so. It is not that Brainard has not written poems which may rank with those of any American, with the single exception of Longfellow—but that the general merit of our whole national Muse has been estimated too highly, and that the author of "The Connecticut River" has, individually, shared in the ex-

* The Poems of John G. C. Brainard. A New and Authentic Collection, with an Original Memoir of his Life. Hartford: Edward Hopkins.

aggeration. No poet among us has composed what would deserve the title of that amount of approbation so innocently lavished upon Brainard. But it would not suit our purpose just now, to enter into any elaborate analysis of his productions. It so happens, however, that we open the book at a brief poem, an examination of which will stand us in good stead of this general analysis, since it is by this very poem that the admirers of its author are content to swear—since it is the fashion to cite it as his best —since thus, in short, it is the chief basis of his notoriety, if not the surest triumph of his fame.

We allude to "The Fall of Niagara," and shall be pardoned for quoting it in full.

The thoughts are strange that crowd into my brain
While I look upward to thee. It would seem
As if God poured thee from his hollow hand,
And hung his bow upon thy awful front,
And spoke in that loud voice which seemed to him
Who dwelt in Patmos for his Saviour's sake
The "sound of many waters," and had bade
Thy flood to chronicle the ages back
And notch his centuries in the eternal rocks.

Deep calleth unto deep. And what are we
That hear the question of that voice sublime?
Oh, what are all the notes that ever rung
From war's vain trumpet by thy thundering side?
Yea, what is all the riot man can make
In his short life to thy unceasing roar?
And yet, bold babbler, what art thou to HIM
Who drowned the world and heaped the waters far
Above its loftiest mountains?—a light wave
That breaks and whispers of its Maker's might.

It is a very usual thing to hear these verses called not merely the best of their author, but the best which have been written on the subject of Niagara. Its positive merit appears to us only partial. We have been informed that the poet *had seen* the great cataract before writing the lines; but the Memoir prefixed to the present edition, denies what, for our own part, we never believed, for Brainard was truly a poet, and no poet could have looked upon Niagara, in the substance, and written thus about it.

If he saw it at all, it must have been in fancy—"at a distance"—εκας—as the lying Pindar says he saw Archilocus, who died ages before the villain was born.

To the two opening lines we have no objection; but it may be well observed, in passing, that had the mind of the poet been really "crowded with strange thoughts," and not merely *engaged in an endeavor to think*, he would have entered at once upon the thoughts themselves, without allusion to the state of his brain. His subject would have left him no room for self.

The third line embodies an absurd, and impossible, not to say a contemptible image. We are called upon to conceive a similarity between the *continuous* downward sweep of Niagara, and the momentary splashing of some definite and of course trifling quantity of water *from a hand;* for, although it is the hand of the Deity himself which is referred to, the mind is irresistibly led, by the words "poured from his hollow hand," to that idea which has been *customarily* attached to such phrase. It is needless

to say, moreover, that the bestowing upon Deity a human form, is at best a low and most unideal conception.* In fact the poet has committed the grossest of errors in *likening* the fall to *any* material object; for the human fancy can fashion nothing which shall not be inferior in majesty to the cataract itself. Thus bathos is inevitable; and there is no better exemplification of bathos than Mr. Brainard has here given. †

The fourth line but renders the matter worse, for here

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* The Humanitarians held that God was to be understood as having really a human form—See "Clarke's Sermons," vol. I., p. 26, fol. edit.

"The drift of Milton's argument leads him to employ language which would appear, at first sight, to verge upon their doctrine; but it will be seen immediately that he guards himself against the charge of having adopted one of the most ignorant errors of the dark ages of the church."—Dr. Summer's Notes on Milton's "Christian Doctrine."

The opinion could never have been very general. Andens, a Syrian of Mesopotamia, who lived in the fourth century, was condemned for the doctrine, as heretical. His few disciples were called Anthropmorphites.—See *Du Pin.*

† It is remarkable that Drake, of whose "Culprit Fay" we have just spoken, is, perhaps, the sole poet who has employed, in the description of Niagara, imagery which does not produce a pathetic impression. In one of his minor poems he has these magnificent lines:

How sweet 't would be, *when all the air*
In moonlight swims, along the river
To couch upon the grass and hear
Niagara's everlasting voice
Far in the deep blue West away;
That dreamy and poetic noise
We mark not in the glare of day—
Oh, how unlike its torrent-cry
When o'er the brink the tide is driven
As if the vast and sheeted sky
In thunder fell from Heaven!

the figure is most inartistically shifted. The handful of water becomes animate; for it has a front—that is, a forehead, and upon this forehead the Deity proceeds to hang a bow—that is, a rainbow. At the same time he "speaks in that loud voice," etc., and here it is obvious that the ideas of the writer are in a sad state of fluctuation; for he transfers the idiosyncrasy of the fall itself (that is to say, its sound) to the one who pours it from his hand. But not content with all this, Mr. Brainard commands the flood to *keep a kind of tally;* for this is the low thought which the expression about "notching in the rocks" immediately and inevitably induces. The whole of this first division of the poem embraces, we hesitate not to say, one of the most jarring, inappropriate, mean, and in every way monstrous assemblages of false imagery which can be found out of the tragedies of Nat Lee, or the farces of Thomas Carlyle.

In the latter division the poet recovers himself, as if ashamed of his previous bombast. His natural instinct (for Brainard was no artist) has enabled him *to feel* that *subjects which surpass in grandeur all efforts of the human imagination are well depicted only in the simplest and least metaphorical language*—a proposition as susceptible of demonstration as any in Euclid. Accordingly we find a material sinking in tone; although he does not at once discard all imagery. The "Deep calleth unto deep" is nevertheless, a great improvement upon his previous rhetoricianism. The personification of the waters above

and below would be good in reference to any subject less august. The moral reflections which immediately follow have at least the merit of simplicity; but the poet exhibits no very lofty imagination when he bases these reflections only upon the cataract's superiority to man *in the noise it can create;* nor is the concluding idea more spirited, where the mere difference between the quantity of water which occasioned the flood, and the quantity which Niagara precipitates, is made the measure of the Almighty Mind's superiority to that cataract which it called by a thought into existence.

But although "The Fall of Niagara" does not deserve all the unmeaning commendation it has received, there are, nevertheless, many truly beautiful poems in this collection, and even more certain evidences of poetic power. "To a Child, the Daughter of a Friend" is exceedingly graceful and terse. "To the Dead" has equal grace, with more vigor, and, moreover, a touching air of melancholy. Its melody is very rich, and in the monotonous repetition, at each stanza, of a certain rhyme, we recognize a fantastic yet true imagination. "Mr. Merry's Lament for Long Tom" would be worthy of all praise were not its unusually beautiful rhythm an imitation from Campbell, who would deserve his high poetical rank, if only for its construction. Of the merely humorous pieces we have little to say. Such things are not *poetry*. Mr. Brainard excelled in them, and they are very good in their place; but that place is not in a collection of *poems*. The prevalent no-

tions upon this head are extremely vague ; yet we see no reason why any ambiguity should exist. Humor, with an exception to be made hereafter, is directly antagonistical to that which is the soul of the Muse proper ; and the omni-prevalent belief that melancholy is inseparable from the higher manifestations of the beautiful is not without a firm basis in nature and in reason. But it so happens that humor and that quality which we have termed the soul of the Muse (imagination) are both essentially aided in their development by the same adventitious assistance —that of rhythm and of rhyme. Thus the only bond between humorous verse and poetry, properly so-called, is that they employ, in common, a certain tool. But this single circumstance has been sufficient to occasion, and to maintain through long ages, a confusion of two very distinct ideas in the brain of the unthinking critic. There is, nevertheless, an individual branch of humor which blends so happily with the ideal, that from the union result some of the finest effects of legitimate poesy. We allude to what is termed "*archness*"—a trait with which popular feeling, which is unfailingly poetic, has invested, for example, the whole character of the fairy. In the volume before us there is a brief composition entitled "The Tree Toad" which will afford a fine exemplification of our idea. It seems to have been hurriedly constructed, as if its author had felt ashamed of his light labor. But that in his heart there was a secret exultation over these verses for which his reason found it difficult to account,

we know; and there is not a really imaginative man within sound of our voice to-day, who, upon perusal of this little "Tree Toad," will not admit it to be one of the *truest poems* ever written by Brainard.

RUFUS DAWES.

"As a poet," says Mr. Griswold, in his "Poets and Poetry of America," "the standing of Mr. DAWES is as yet unsettled; there being a wide difference of opinion respecting his writings." The *width* of this difference is apparent; and, while to many it is matter for wonder, to those who have the interest of our literature at heart, it is, more properly, a source of mortification and regret. That the author in question has long enjoyed what we term "a high poetical reputation," cannot be denied; and in no manner is this point more strikingly evinced than in the choice of his works, some two years since, by one of our most enterprising publishers, as the *initial* volume of a series, the avowed object of which was the setting forth, in the best array of paper, type, and pictorial embellishment, the *élite* of the American poets. As a writer of occasional stanzas he has been long before the public; always eliciting, from a great variety of sources, *unqualified* commendation. With the exception of a solitary remark, adventured by ourselves in "A Chapter on Autography," there has been no written dissent from the universal opinion in his favor—the universal *apparent* opin-

ion. Mr. Griswold's observation must be understood, we presume, as referring to the *conversational* opinion upon this topic; or it is not impossible that he holds in view the difference between the criticism of the newspaper paragraphs and the private comment of the educated and intelligent. Be this as it may, the rapidly growing "reputation" of our poet was much enhanced by the publication of his first compositions "of length," and attained its climax, we believe, upon the public recitation, by himself, of a tragic drama, in five acts, entitled "Athenia of Damascus," to a large assembly of admiring and applauding *friends*, gathered together for the occasion in one of the halls of the University of New York.

This popular decision, so frequent and so public, in regard to the poetical ability of Mr. Dawes, might be received as evidence of his actual merit (and by thousands it *is* so received) were it not too scandalously at variance with a species of criticism which *will not* be resisted—with the perfectly simple precepts of the very commonest common-sense. The peculiarity of Mr. Griswold's observation has induced us to make inquiry into the true character of the volume to which we have before alluded, and which embraces, we believe, the chief portion of the published verse-compositions of its author.* This inquiry has but resulted in the confirmation of our previous opinion; and we now hesitate not to say, that no man in

* "Geraldine, Athenia of Damascus, and Miscellaneous Poems." By Rufus Dawes. Published by Samuel Colman, New York.

America has been more shamefully over-estimated than the one who forms the subject of this article. We say shamefully; for, though a better day is now dawning upon our literary interests, and a laudation so indiscriminate will never be sanctioned again—the laudation in this instance, as it stands upon record, must be regarded as a laughable although bitter satire upon the general zeal, accuracy, and independence of that critical spirit which, but a few years ago, pervaded and degraded the land.

In what we shall say we have no intention of being profound. Here is a case in which any thing like analysis would be utterly thrown away. Our purpose (which is truth) will be more fully answered by an unvarnished exposition of fact. It appears to us, indeed, that in excessive *generalization* lies one of the leading errors of a criticism employed upon a poetical literature so immature as our own. We rhapsodize rather than discriminate; delighting more in the dictation or discussion of a principle, than in its particular and methodical application. The wildest and most erratic effusion of the Muse, not utterly worthless, will be found more or less indebted to *method* for whatever of value it embodies; and we shall discover, conversely, that in any analysis of even the wildest effusion, we labor without method only to labor without end. There is little reason for that vagueness of comment which, of late, we so pertinaciously affect, and which has been brought into fashion, no doubt, through the proverbial facility and security of merely general remark. In

regard to the leading principles of true poesy, these, we think, stand not at all in need of the elucidation hourly wasted upon them. Founded in the unerring instincts of our nature, they are enduring and immutable. In a rigid scrutiny of any number of directly conflicting opinions upon a poetical topic, we will not fail to perceive that principles identical in every important point have been, in each opinion, either asserted, or intimated, or unwittingly allowed an influence. The differences of decision arose simply from those of application; and from such variety in the applied rather than in the conceived idea, sprang undoubtedly, the absurd distinctions of the "schools."

"Geraldine" is the title of the first and longest poem in the volume before us. It embraces some three hundred and fifty stanzas—the whole being a most servile imitation of the "Don Juan" of Lord Byron. The outrageous absurdity of the systematic *digression* in the British original, was so managed as to form not a little portion of its infinite interest and humor; and the fine discrimination of the writer pointed out to him a limit beyond which he never ventured with this tantalizing species of drollery. "Geraldine" may be regarded, however as a simple embodiment of the whole soul of digression. It is a mere mass of irrelevancy, amid the mad *farrago* of which we detect with difficulty even the faintest vestige of a narrative, and where the continuous lapse from impertinence to impertinence is seldom justified by any shadow of appositeness or even of the commonest relation.

To afford the reader any proper conception of the *story*, is of course a matter of difficulty; we must content ourselves with a mere outline of the general conduct. This we shall endeavor to give without indulgence in those feelings of risibility stirred up in us by the primitive perusal. We shall rigorously avoid every species of exaggeration, and confine ourselves, with perfect honesty, to the conveyance of a distinct image.

"Geraldine," then, opens with some four or five stanzas descriptive of a sylvan scene in America. We could, perhaps, render Mr. Dawes' poetical reputation no greater service than by the quotation of these simple verses in full.

I know a spot where poets fain would dwell,
To gather flowers and food for after thought,
As bees draw honey from the rose's cell,
To hive among the treasures they have wrought;
And there a cottage from a sylvan screen
Sent up a curling smoke amidst the green.

Around that hermit home of quietude
The elm trees whispered with the summer air,
And nothing ever ventured to intrude
But happy birds that carolled wildly there,
Or honey-laden harvesters that flew
Humming away to drink the morning dew.

Around the door the honey-suckle climbed
And Multa-flora spread her countless roses,
And never poet sang nor minstrel rhymed
Romantic scene where happiness reposes,
Sweeter to sense than that enchanting dell
Where home-sick memory fondly loves to dwell.

Beneath the mountain's brow the cottage stood.
Hard by a shelving lake whose pebbled bed

Was skirted by the drapery of a wood
That hung its festoon foliage overhead,
Where wild deer came at eve unharmed, to drink,
While moonlight threw their shadows from the brink.

The green earth heaved her giant waves around,
Where, through the mountain vista, one vast height
Towered heavenward without peer, his forehead bound
With gorgeous clouds, at times of changeful light,
While, far below, the lake in bridal rest
Slept with his glorious picture on her breast.

Here is an air of quietude in good keeping with the theme; the "giant waves" in the last stanza redeem it from much exception otherwise; and perhaps we need say nothing at all of the suspicious-looking compound "Mult*a*-flora." Had Mr. Dawes always written even nearly so well, we should have been spared to-day the painful task imposed upon us by a stern sense of our critical duty. These passages are followed immediately by an address or invocation to "Peerless America," including apostrophes to Allston and Claude Lorraine.

We now learn the name of the tenant of the cottage, which is *Wilton*, and ascertain that he has an only daughter. A single stanza quoted at this juncture will aid the reader's conception of the queer tone of philosophical rhapsody with which the poem teems, and some specimen of which is invariably made to follow each little modicum of incident.

How like the heart is to an instrument
A touch can wake to gladness or to woe!
How like the circumambient element
The spirit with its undulating flow!

> The heart—the soul—O Mother Nature, why
> This universal bond of sympathy?

After two pages much in this manner, we are told that *Geraldine* is the name of the maiden, and are informed, with comparatively little circumlocution, of her character. She is beautiful, and kind-hearted, and somewhat romantic, and "some thought her reason touched"—for which we have little disposition to blame them. There is now much about Kant and Fichte; about Schelling, Hegel, and Cousin (which last is made to rhyme with *gang*); about Milton, Byron, Homer, Spinoza, David Hume, and Mirabeau; and a good deal, too, about the *scribendi cacoëthes*, in which an evident misunderstanding of the quantity of *cacoëthes* brings, again, into very disagreeable suspicion the writer's cognizance of the Latin tongue. At this point we may refer, also, to such absurdities as

> Truth with her thousand-folded robe of error
> Close shut in her *sarcophagi* of terror—

And

> Where *candelabri* silver the white walls.

Now, no one is presupposed to be cognizant of any language beyond his own; to be ignorant of Latin is no crime; to pretend a knowledge is beneath contempt; and the pretender will attempt in vain to utter or to write two consecutive phrases of a foreign idiom, without betraying his deficiency to those who are conversant.

At page 39, there is some prospect of a progress in the story. Here we are introduced to a Mr. Acus and his fair daughter, Miss Alice.

Acus had been a dashing Bond Street tailor
Some few short years before, who took his measures
So carefully he always cut the jailor
And filled his coffers with exhaustless treasures ;
Then with his wife, a son, and three fair daughters,
He sunk the goose and straightway crossed the waters.

His residence is in the immediate vicinity of Wilton. The daughter, Miss Alice, who is said to be quite a belle, is enamored of one Waldron, a foreigner, a lion, and a gentleman of questionable reputation. His character (which for our life and soul we cannot comprehend) is given within the space of some forty or fifty stanzas, made to include, at the same time, an essay on motives, deduced from the text "whatever is must be," and illuminated by a long note at the end of the poem, wherein the *systime* (quere *système ?*) *de la nature* is sturdily attacked. Let us speak the truth : this note (and the whole of them, for there are many) may be regarded as a glorious specimen of the concentrated essence of rigmarole, and, to say nothing of their utter absurdity *per se*, are so ludicrously uncalled for, and grotesquely out of place, that we found it impossible to refrain, during their perusal, from a most unbecoming and uproarious guffaw. We will be pardoned for giving a specimen—selecting it for its brevity.

Reason, he deemed, could measure every thing,
  And reason told him that there was a law
Of mental action which must ever fling
  A death-bolt at all faith, and this he saw
Was Transference. (14)

Turning to Note 14, we read thus—

"If any one has a curiosity to look into this subject, (does Mr. Dawes *really* think any one so great a fool?) and wishes to see how far the force of reasoning and analysis may carry him, independently of revelation, I would suggest (thank you, sir) such inquiries as the following:

"Whether the first Philosophy, considered in relation to Physics, was first in time?

"How far our moral perceptions have been influenced by natural phenomena?

"How far our metaphysical notions of cause and effect are attributable to the transference of notions connected with logical language?"

And all this in a poem about Acus, a tailor!

Waldron prefers, unhappily, Geraldine to Alice, and Geraldine returns his love, exciting thus the deep indignation of the neglected fair one,

> whom love and jealousy bear up
> To mingle poison in her rival's cup.

Miss A. has among her adorers one of the genus loafer, whose appellation, not improperly, is Bore. B. is acquainted with a milliner—the milliner of the disconsolate lady.

> She made this milliner her friend, who swore,
> To work her full revenge through Mr. Bore.

And now says the poet—

> I leave your sympathetic fancies,
> To fill the outline of this pencil sketch.

This filling has been, with us at least, a matter of no little difficulty. We believe, however, that the affair is intended to run thus:—Waldron is enticed to some vile sins by Bore, and the knowledge of these, on the part of Alice, places the former gentleman in her power.

We are now introduced to a *fête champêtre* at the residence of Acus, who, by the way, has a son, Clifford, a suitor to Geraldine with the approbation of her father —that good old gentleman, for whom our sympathies were excited in the beginning of things, being influenced by the consideration that this scion of the house of the tailor will inherit a plum. The worst of the whole is, however, that the romantic Geraldine, who should have known better, and who loves Waldron, loves also the young knight of the shears. The consequence is a rencontre of the rival suitors at the *fête champêtre;* Waldron knocking his antagonist on the head, and throwing him into the lake. The murderer, as well as we can make out the narrative, now joins a piratical band, among whom he alternately cuts throats and sings songs of his own composition. In the meantime the deserted Geraldine mourns alone, till, upon a certain day,

> A shape stood by her like a thing of air—
> She started—Waldron's haggard face was there.
> * * * * *
> He laid her gently down, of sense, bereft,
> And sunk his picture on her bosom's snow.
> And close beside these lines in blood he left:
> "Farewell forever, Geraldine, I go

Another woman's victim—dare I tell?
'T is Alice!—curse us, Geraldine!—farewell!"

There is no possibility of denying the fact: this *is* a droll piece of business. The lover brings forth a miniature (Mr. Dawes has a passion for miniatures), *sinks* it in the bosom of the lady, cuts his finger, and writes with the blood an epistle (*where* is not specified, but we presume he indites it upon the bosom as it is "close beside" the picture), in which epistle he announces that he is "another woman's victim," giving us to understand that he himself is a woman after all, and concluding with the delicious bit of Billingsgate

dare I tell?
'T is Alice!—curse us, Geraldine!—farewell!

We suppose, however, that "curse us" is a misprint; for why should Geraldine curse both herself and her lover?—it should have been "curse it!" no doubt. The whole passage, perhaps, would have read better thus—

oh, my eye!
'T is Alice!—d—n it, Geraldine!—good-bye!

The remainder of the narrative may be briefly summed up. Waldron returns to his professional engagements with the pirates, while Geraldine, attended by her father, goes to sea for the benefit of her health. The consequence is inevitable. The vessels of the separated lovers meet and engage in the most diabolical of conflicts. Both are blown all to pieces. In a boat from one vessel, Waldron escapes—in a boat from the other, the lady

Geraldine. Now, as a second natural consequence, the parties meet again—Destiny is every thing in such cases. Well, the parties meet again. The lady Geraldine has "that miniature" about her neck, and the circumstance proves too much for the excited state of mind of Mr. Waldron. He just seizes her ladyship, therefore, by the small of the waist, and incontinently leaps with her into the sea.

However intolerably absurd this skeleton of the story may appear, a thorough perusal will convince the reader that the entire fabric is even more so. It is impossible to convey, in any such digest as we have given, a full idea of the *niaiseries* with which the narrative abounds. An utter want of *keeping* is especially manifest throughout. In the most solemnly serious passages we have, for example, incidents of the world of 1839 jumbled up with the distorted mythology of the Greeks. Our conclusion of the drama, as we just gave it, was perhaps ludicrous enough; but how much more preposterous does it appear in the grave language of the poet himself!

> And round her neck the miniature was hung
> Of him who gazed with Hell's unmingled woe;
> He saw her, kissed her cheek, and wildly flung
> His arms around her with a madd'ning throw—
> Then plunged within the cold unfathomed deep
> While sirens sang their victim to his sleep!

Only think of a group of *sirens* singing to sleep a modern "miniatured" flirt, kicking about in the water with a New York dandy in tight pantaloons!

But not even these stupidities would suffice to justify a total condemnation of the poetry of Mr. Dawes. We have known follies very similar committed by men of real ability, and have been induced to disregard them in earnest admiration of the brilliancy of the minor beauty of *style*. Simplicity, perspicuity, and vigor, or a well-disciplined ornateness of language, have done wonders for the reputation of many a writer really deficient in the higher and more essential qualities of the Muse. But upon these minor points of manner our poet has not even the shadow of a shadow to sustain him. His works, in this respect, may be regarded as a theatrical world of mere verbiage, somewhat speciously bedizzened with a tinselly meaning well adapted to the eyes of the rabble. There is not a page of any thing that he has written which will bear, for an instant, the scrutiny of a critical eye. Exceedingly fond of the glitter of metaphor, he has not the capacity to manage it, and, in the awkward attempt, jumbles together the most incongruous of ornament. Let us take any passage of "Geraldine" by way of exemplification.

> ———Thy rivers swell the sea—
> In one eternal diapason pour
> Thy cataracts the hymn of liberty,
> Teaching the clouds to thunder.

Here we have cataracts teaching clouds to thunder—and how! By means of a hymn.

> Why should chromatic discord charm the ear
> And smiles and tears stream o'er with troubled joy?

Tears may stream over, but not smiles.

> Then comes the breathing time of young Romance,
> The June of life, when summer's earliest ray
> Warms the red arteries, that bound and dance
> With soft voluptuous impulses at play,
> While the full heart sends forth as from a hive
> A thousand wingéd messengers alive.

Let us reduce this to a simple statement, and we have—what? The earliest ray of summer warming red arteries, which are bounding and dancing, and playing with a parcel of urchins, called voluptuous impulses, while the bee-hive of a heart attached to these dancing arteries is at the same time sending forth a swarm of its innocent little inhabitants.

> The eyes were like the sapphire of deep air,
> The garb that distance robes elysium in,
> But oh, so much of heaven lingered there
> The wayward heart forgot its blissful sin
> And worshipped all Religion well forbids
> Beneath the silken fringes of their lids.

That *distance* is *not* the cause of the sapphire of the sky, is not to our present purpose. We wish merely to call attention to the verbiage of the stanza. It is impossible to put the latter portion of it into any thing like intelligible prose. So much of heaven lingered in the lady's eyes that the wayward heart forgot its blissful sin, and worshiped every thing which religion forbids, beneath the silken fringes of the lady's eyelids. This we cannot be compelled to understand, and shall therefore say nothing further about it.

She loved to lend Imagination wing
And link her heart's with Juliet's in a dream,
And feel the music of a sister string
That thrilled the current of her vital stream.

How delightful a picture we have here! A lady is lending one of her wings to the spirit, or genius, called Imagination, who, of course, has lost one of his own. While thus employed with one hand, with the other she is chaining her heart to the heart of the fair Juliet. At the same time she is feeling the music of a sister string, and this string is thrilling the current of the lady's vital stream. If this is downright nonsense we cannot be held responsible for its perpetration; it is but the downright nonsense of Mr. Dawes.

Again—

Without the Palinurus of self-science
Byron embarked upon the stormy sea,
To adverse breezes hurling his defiance
And dashing up the rainbows on his lee,
And chasing those he made in wildest mirth,
Or sending back their images to earth.

This stanza we have more than once seen quoted as a fine specimen of the poetical powers of our author. His lordship, no doubt, is herein made to cut a very remarkable figure. Let us imagine him, for one moment, embarked upon a stormy sea, hurling his defiance (literally throwing his gauntlet or glove) to the adverse breezes, dashing up rainbows on his lee, laughing at them, and chasing them at the same time, and, in conclusion, "sending back their images to earth." But we have

already wearied the reader with this abominable rigmarole. We shall be pardoned (after the many specimens thus given at random) for not carrying out the design we originally intended: that of commenting upon two or three successive pages of "Geraldine," with a view of showing (in a spirit apparently more fair than that of particular selection) the *entireness* with which the whole poem is pervaded by unintelligibility. To every thinking mind, however, this would seem a work of supererogation. In such matters, by such understandings, the brick of the *skolastikos* will be received implicitly as a sample of the house. The writer *capable*, to any extent, of such absurdity as we have pointed out, *cannot*, by any possibility, produce a long article worth reading. We say this in the very teeth of the magnificent assembly which listened to the recital of Mr. Dawes, in the great hall of the University of New York. We shall leave "Athenia of Damascus," without comment, to the decision of those who may find time and temper for its perusal, and conclude our extracts by a quotation, from among the minor poems, of the following very respectable

ANACREONTIC.

Fill again the mantling bowl,
  Nor fear to meet the morning breaking!
None but slaves should bend the soul
  Beneath the chains of mortal making;
Fill your beakers to the brim,
  Bacchus soon shall lull your sorrow;
    Let delight
    But crown the night,
  And Care may bring her clouds to-morrow.

Mark this cup of rosy wine
With virgin pureness deeply blushing ;
Beauty pressed it from the vine
While Love stood by to charm its gushing ;
He who dares to drain it now
Shall drink such bliss as seldom gladdens ;
The Moslem's dream
Would joyless seem
To him whose brain its rapture maddens.

Pleasure sparkles on the brim—
Lethe lies far deeper in it—
Both, enticing, wait for him
Whose heart is warm enough to win it ;
Hearts like ours, if e'er they chill,
Soon with love again must lighten.
Skies may wear
A darksome air
Where sunshine most is known to brighten.

Then fill, fill high the mantling bowl !
Nor fear to meet the morning breaking ;
Care shall never cloud the soul
While Beauty's beaming eyes are waking.
Fill your beakers to the brim,
Bacchus soon shall lull your sorrow ;
Let delight
But crown the night,
And Care may bring her clouds to-morrow.

Whatever shall be, hereafter, the position of Mr. Dawes in the poetical world, he will be indebted for it altogether to his shorter compositions, some of which have the merit of tenderness ; others of melody and force. What seems to be the popular opinion in respect to his more voluminous effusions, has been brought about, in some measure, by a certain general *tact*, nearly amounting to taste, and more nearly the converse of talent. This tact has been

especially displayed in the choice of not inelegant titles and other externals; in a peculiar imitative speciousness of manner pervading the surface of his writings, and (here we have the anomaly of a positive benefit deduced from a radical defect) in an absolute deficiency in basis, in *stamen*, in matter, or pungency, which, if even slightly evinced, might have invited the reader to an intimate and understanding perusal, whose result would have been disgust. His poems have not been condemned, only because they have never been read. The glitter upon the surface has sufficed, with the newspaper critic, to justify his hyperboles of praise. Very few persons, we feel assured, have had sufficient nerve to wade *through* the entire volume now in question, except, as in our own case, with the single object of criticism in view. Mr. Dawes has, also, been aided to a poetical reputation by the amiability of his character as a man. How efficient such causes have before been in producing such effects, is a point but too thoroughly understood.

We have already spoken of the numerous *friends* of the poet; and we shall not here insist upon the fact, that *we* bear him no personal ill-will. With those who know us, such a declaration would appear supererogatory; and by those who know us not, it would, doubtless, be received with incredulity. What we have said, however, is *not* in opposition to Mr. Dawes, nor even so much in opposition to the poems of Mr. Dawes, as in defence of the many true souls which, in Mr. Dawes'

apotheosis, are aggrieved. The laudation of the unworthy is to the worthy the most bitter of all wrong. But it is unbecoming in him who merely demonstrates a truth, to offer reason or apology for the demonstration.

FLACCUS.—THOMAS WARD.

The poet now comprehended in the *cognomen* Flaccus, is by no means our ancient friend Quintus Horatius, nor even his ghost, but merely a Mr. —— WARD, of Gotham, once a contributor to the New York *American*, and to the New York *Knickerbocker Magazine*. He is characterized by Mr. Griswold, in his "Poets and Poetry of America," as a gentleman of elegant leisure.

What there is in "elegant leisure" so much at war with the divine *afflatus*, it is not very difficult, but quite unnecessary, to say. The *fact* has been long apparent. Never sing the Nine so well as when penniless. The *mens divinior* is one thing, and the *otium cum dignitate* quite another.

Of course Mr. Ward is not, as a poet, altogether destitute of merit. If so, the public had been spared these paragraphs. But the sum of his deserts has been footed up by a *clique* who are in the habit of reckoning units as tens in all cases where champagne and "elegant leisure" are concerned. We do not consider him, at all points, a Pop Emmons, but, with deference to the more matured opinions of the *Knickerbocker*, we may be permitted to

entertain a doubt whether he is either Jupiter Tonans or Phœbus Apollo.

Justice is not, at all times, to all persons, the most desirable thing in the world, but then there is the old adage about the tumbling of the heavens, and *simple* justice is all that we propose in the case of Mr. Ward. We have *no* design to be bitter. We notice his book at all, only because it is an unusually large one of its kind, because it is here lying upon our table, and because, whether justly or unjustly, whether for good reason or for none, it has attracted some portion of the attention of the public.

The volume is entitled, somewhat affectedly: "Passaic, a Group of Poems Touching that River; with Other Musings, by Flaccus," and embodies, we believe, all the previously published effusions of its author. It commences with a very pretty "Sonnet to Passaic," and from the second poem, "Introductory Musings on Rivers," we are happy in being able to quote an entire page of even remarkable beauty.

> Beautiful rivers! that adown the vale
> With graceful passage journey to the deep,
> Let me along your grassy marge recline
> At ease, and, musing, meditate the strange
> Bright history of your life; yes, from your birth
> Has beauty's shadow chased your every step:
> The blue sea was your mother, and the sun
> Your glorious sire, clouds your voluptuous cradle,
> Roofed with o'erarching rainbows; and your fall
> To earth was cheered with shouts of happy birds,
> With brightened faces of reviving flowers
> And meadows, while the sympathizing west

Took holiday, and donn'd her richest robes.
From deep mysterious wanderings your springs
Break bubbling into beauty ; where they lie
In infant helplessness awhile, but soon
Gathering in tiny brooks, they gambol down
The steep sides of the mountain, laughing, shouting,
Teasing the wild flowers, and at every turn
Meeting new playmates still to swell their ranks ;
Which, with the rich increase resistless grown,
Shed foam and thunder, that the echoing wood
Rings with the boisterous glee ; while, o'er their heads,
Catching their spirit blithe, young rainbows sport,
The frolic children of the wanton sun.

Nor is your swelling prime, or green old age,
Though calm, unlovely ; still, where'er ye move,
Your train is beauty ; trees stand grouping by,
To mark your graceful progress ; giddy flowers
And vain, as beauties wont, stoop o'er the verge
To greet their faces in your flattering glass ;
The thirsty herd are following at your side ;
And water-birds in clustering fleets convoy
Your sea-bound tides ; and jaded man, released
From worldly thraldom, here his dwelling plants—
Here pauses in your pleasant neighborhood,
Sure of repose along your tranquil shores ;
And, when your end approaches, and ye blend
With the eternal ocean, ye shall fade
As placidly as when an infant dies,
And the Death-Angel shall your powers withdraw
Gently as twilight takes the parting day,
And, with a soft and gradual decline
That cheats the senses, lets it down to night.

There is nothing very *original* in all this; the general idea is, perhaps, the most absolutely trite in poetical literature ; but the theme is not the less just on this account, while we must confess that it is admirably handled. The picture embodied in the whole of the concluding para-

graph is perfect. The seven final lines convey not only a novel but a highly appropriate and beautiful image.

What follows, of this poem, however, is by no means worthy so fine a beginning. Instead of confining himself to the true poetical thesis, the Beauty or the Sublimity of river scenery, he descends into mere meteorology —into the uses and general philosophy of rain, etc.—matters which should be left to Mr. Espy, who knows something about them, as we are sorry to say Mr. Flaccus does *not*.

The second and chief *poem* in the volume, is entitled "The Great Descender." We emphasize the "poem" merely by way of suggesting that "The Great Descender" is any thing else. We never could understand what pleasure men of talent can take in concocting elaborate doggerel of this order. Least of all can we comprehend why, having perpetrated the atrocity, they should place it at the door of the Muse. We are at a loss to know by what right, human or divine, twattle of this character is intruded into a collection of what professes to be *Poetry*. We put it to Mr. Ward, in all earnestness, if "The Great Descender," which is a history of Sam Patch, has a single attribute, beyond that of mere versification, in common with what even Sam Patch himself would have had the hardihood to denominate a poem.

Let us call this thing a rhymed *jeu d'esprit*, a burlesque, or what not?—and, even so called, and judged by its new name, we must still regard it as a failure. Even in the

loosest compositions we demand a certain degree of *keeping*. But in "The Great Descender" none is apparent. The *tone* is unsteady—fluctuating between the grave and the gay—and never being precisely either. Thus there is a failure in both. The intention being never rightly *taken*, we are, of course, never exactly in condition either to weep or to laugh.

We do not pretend to be the Oracles of Dodona, but it does really appear to us that Mr. Flaccus intended the whole matter, in the first instance, as a solemnly serious thing; and that, having composed it in a grave vein, he became apprehensive of its exciting derision, and so interwove sundry touches of the burlesque, behind whose equivocal aspect, he might shelter himself at need. In no other supposition can we reconcile the *spotty* appearance of the whole with a belief in the sanity of the author. It is difficult, also, in any other view of the case, to appreciate the air of positive gravity with which he descants upon the advantages to *Science* which have accrued from a man's making a frog of himself. Mr. Ward is frequently pleased to denominate Mr. Patch "a martyr of science," and appears very doggedly in earnest in all passages such as the following:

> Through the glad heavens, which tempests now conceal,
> Deep thunder-guns in quick succession peal,
> As if salutes were firing from the sky,
> To hail the triumph and the victory.
> Shout! trump of Fame, till thy brass lungs burst out!
> Shout! mortal tongues! deep-throated thunders, shout!
> For lo! electric *genius*, downward hurled,
> Has startled *Science*, and illumed the world!

That Mr. Patch was a *genius* we do not doubt; so is Mr. Ward, but the *science* displayed in jumping down the falls, is a point above us. There might have been some science in jumping *up*.

"The Worth of Beauty; or, A Lover's Journal," is the title of the poem next in place and importance. Of this composition Mr. W. thus speaks in a note: "The individual to whom the present poem relates, and who had suffered severely all the pains and penalties which arise from the want of those personal charms so much admired by him in others, gave the author, many years since, some fragments of a journal kept in his early days, in which he had bared his heart and set down all his thoughts and feelings. This prose journal has here been transplanted into the richer soil of verse."

The narrative of the friend of Mr. Flaccus must, originally, have been a very good thing. By "originally" we mean before it had the misfortune to be "transplanted into the richer soil of verse"—which has by no means agreed with its constitution. But, even through the dense fog of our author's rhythm, we can get an occasional glimpse of its merit. It must have been the work of a heart on fire with passion, and the utter *abandon* of the details, reminds us even of Jean Jacques. But alas for this "richer soil"! *Can* we venture to present our readers with a specimen?

> Now roses blush, and violets' eyes
> And seas reflect the glance of skies;
> And now *that frolic pencil* streaks
> With quaintest tints the tulips' cheeks;

Now jewels bloom in secret worth,
Like blossoms of the inner earth ;
Now painted birds are pouring round
The beauty and the wealth of sound ;
Now sea-shells glance with quivering ray,
Too rare to seize, too fleet to stay,
And hues out-dazzling all the rest
Are dashed profusely on the west,
While rainbows seem to palettes changed,
Whereon the motley tints are ranged.
But soft the moon *that pencil* tipped,
As though, in liquid radiance dipped,
A likeness of the sun it drew,
But flattened him with pearlier hue ;
Which haply spilling runs astray,
And blots with light the milky way ;
While stars besprinkle all the air,
Like spatterings of *that pencil* there.

All this by way of *exalting* the subject. The moon is made a painter, and the rainbow a palette. And the moon has a pencil (*that* pencil !) which she dips, by way of a brush, in the liquid radiance (the colors on a palette are *not* liquid), and then *draws* (not paints) a likeness of the sun ; but, in the attempt, plasters him too "pearly," puts it on too thick ; the consequence of which is that some of the paint is spilt, and "runs astray," and besmears the milky way, and "spatters" the rest of the sky with stars ! We can only say that a very singular picture was spoilt in the making.

The *versification* of "The Worth of Beauty" proceeds much after this fashion ; we select a fair example of the whole from page 43.

Yes ! pangs have cut my soul with grief
So keen that gashes were relief,

And racks have wrung my spirit-frame
To which the strain of joints were tame,
And battle strife itself were nought
Beside the inner fight I 've fought. etc., etc.

Nor do we regard any portion of it (so far as rhythm is concerned) as at all comparable to some of the better ditties of William Slater. Here, for example, from his Psalms, published in 1642:

The righteous shall his sorrow scan
And laugh at him, and say: "Behold
What hath become of this here man
That on his riches was so bold."

And here, again, are lines from the edition of the same Psalms, by Archbishop Parker, which we most decidedly prefer:

Who sticketh to God in sable trust
As Sion's mount he stands full just,
Which moveth no whit nor yet can reel,
But standeth forever as stiff as steel.

"The Martyr" and "The Retreat of Seventy-Six" are merely Revolutionary incidents "done into verse," and spoilt in the doing. "The Retreat" begins with the remarkable line,

Tramp! tramp! tramp! tramp!

which is elsewhere introduced into the poem. We look in vain, here, for any thing worth even qualified commendation.

"The Diary" is a record of events occurring to the author during a voyage from New York to Havre. Of these events a fit of sea-sickness is the chief. Mr. Ward,

we believe, is the first of the *genus irritabile* who has ventured to treat so delicate a subject with that grave dignity which is its due:

> Rejoice! rejoice! already on my sight
> Bright shores, gray towers, and coming wonders reel;
> My brain grows giddy—is it with delight?
> A swimming faintness, such as one might feel
> When stabbed and dying, gathers on my sense—
> It weighs me down—and now—help!—horror!—

But the "horror," and indeed all that ensues, we must leave to the fancy of the poetical.

Some pieces entitled "Humorous" next succeed, and one or two of them (for example, "The Graham System" and "The Bachelor's Lament") are not so *very* contemptible in their way, but the way itself is beneath even contempt.

"To an Infant in Heaven" embodies some striking thoughts, and, although feeble as a whole, and terminating lamely, may be cited as the best composition in the volume. We quote two or three of the opening stanzas:

> Thou bright and star-like spirit!
> That in my visions wild
> I see 'mid heaven's seraphic host—
> Oh! canst thou be my child?
>
> My grief is quenched in wonder,
> And pride arrests my sighs;
> A branch from this unworthy stock
> Now blossoms in the skies.
>
> Our hopes of thee were lofty,
> But have we cause to grieve?
> Oh! could our fondest, proudest wish
> A nobler fate conceive?

The little weeper tearless !
  The sinner snatched from sin !
The babe to more than manhood grown,
  Ere childhood did begin !

And I, thy earthly teacher,
  Would blush thy powers to see !
Thou art to me a parent now,
  And I a child to thee !

There are several other pieces in the book—but it is needless to speak of them in detail. Among them we note one or two political effusions, and one or two which are (satirically ?) termed satirical. All are worthless.

Mr. Ward's *imagery*, at detached points, has occasional vigor and appropriateness ; we may go so far as to say that, at times, it is strikingly beautiful—by accident of course. Let us cite a few instances. At page 53 we read—

O ! happy day !—earth, sky is fair,
And fragrance floats along the air ;
For all the bloomy orchards glow
As with a fall of rosy snow.

At page 91—

How flashed the overloaded flowers
With gems, a present from the showers.

At page 92—

No ! there is danger ; all the night
I saw her like a starry light
More lovely in my visions lone
Than in my day-dreams' truth she shone.
'T is naught when on the sun we gaze
If only dazzled by his rays,
But when our eyes his form retain
Some wound to vision must remain.

And again, at page 234, speaking of a slight shock of an earthquake, the earth is said to tremble

> As if some wing of passing angel, bound
> From sphere to sphere, had brushed the golden chain
> That hangs our planet to the throne of God.

This latter passage, however, is, perhaps, not altogether original with Mr. Ward. In a poem now lying before us, entitled "Al Aaraaf," the composition of a gentleman of Philadelphia, we find what follows:

> A dome by link'd light from heaven let down
> Sat gently on these columns as a crown;
> A window of one circular diamond there
> Looked out above into the purple air,
> And rays from God shot down that meteor chain
> And hallow'd all the beauty twice again,
> Save when, between th' Empyrean and that ring,
> Some eager spirit flapped his dusky wing.

But if Mr. Ward's imagery is, indeed, at rare intervals, good, it must be granted, on the other hand, that, in general, it is atrociously inappropriate, or low. For example:

> Thou gaping chasm! whose wide devouring throat
> Swallows a river, *while the gulping note*
> *Of monstrous deglutition gurgles loud*, etc. *Page* 24.

> Bright Beauty! child of starry birth,
> The grace, the gem, the flower of earth,
> The *damask livery* of Heaven! *Page* 44.

Here the mind wavers between gems, and stars, and taffety—between footmen and flowers. Again, at page 46—

All thornless flowers of wit, all chaste
And delicate essays of taste,
All playful fancies, winged wiles,
That from their pinions scatter smiles,
All prompt resource in stress or pain,
Leap ready-armed from woman's brain.

The idea of "thornless flowers," etc., leaping "*ready-armed*" could have entered few brains except those of Mr. Ward.

Of the most ineffable *bad taste* we have instances without number. For example—page 183—

And, straining, fastens on her lips a kiss
That seemed to *suck the life-blood from her heart!*

And here, very gravely, at page 25—

Again he 's rous'd *first cramming in his cheek*
The weed, though vile, that props the nerves when weak.

Here again, at page 33—

Full well he knew where food does not refresh,
The shrivel'd soul sinks inward with the flesh—
That he 's best armed for danger's rash career,
Who 's crammed so full there is no room for fear.

But we doubt if the whole world of literature, poetical or prosaic, can afford a picture more utterly *disgusting* than the following, which we quote from page 177:

But most of all good eating cheers the brain,
Where other joys are rarely met—at sea—
Unless, indeed, we lose as soon as gain—
Ay, there 's the rub, so baffling oft to me.
Boiled, roast, and baked—*what precious choice of dishes*
My generous throat has shared among the fishes!

'T is sweet to leave, in each forsaken spot,
Our foot-prints there—if only in the sand;
'T is sweet to feel we are not all forgot,
That some will weep our flight from every land;
And sweet the knowledge, when the seas I cross,
My briny messmates! ye will mourn my loss.

This passage alone should damn the book—ay, damn a dozen such.

Of what may be termed the *niaiseries*—the silliness—of the volume, there is no end. Under this head we might quote two thirds of the work. For example:

Now lightning, with convulsive spasm
Splits heaven *in many a* fearful chasm. * * *

It takes the high trees by the hair
And, as with *besoms*, sweeps the air. * * *

Now breaks the gloom and through the *chinks*
The moon, in search of opening, *winks*—

All seriously urged, at different points of page 66. Again, on the very next page—

Bees buzzed, and wrens that thronged the rushes
Poured round incessant twittering gushes.

And here, at page 129—

And now he leads her to the slippery brink
Where ponderous tides headlong plunge down the horrid *chink*.

And here, page 109—

And, like a ravenous vulture, *peck*
The smoothness of that cheek and neck.

And here, page 111—

While through the skin worms *wriggling* broke.

And here, page 170—

> And ride the *skittish* backs of untamed waves.

And here, page 214—

> Now clasps its mate in holy prayer
> Or *twangs* a harp of gold.

Mr. Ward, also, is constantly talking about "thunder-guns," "thunder-trumpets," and "thunder-shrieks." He has a bad habit, too, of styling an eye "a weeper," as for example, at page 208—

> Oh, curl in smiles that mouth again
> And wipe that *weeper* dry.

Somewhere else he calls two tears "two sparklers"—very much in the style of Mr. Richard Swiveller, who was fond of denominating Madeira "the rosy." "In the nick," meaning in the height, or fulness, is likewise a pet expression of the auther of "The Great Descender." Speaking of American forests, at page 286, for instance, he says, "let the doubter walk through them in the nick of their glory." A phrase which may be considered as in the very nick of good taste.

We cannot pause to comment upon Mr. Ward's most extraordinary system of versification. *Is* it his own? He has quite an original way of conglomerating consonants, and seems to have been experimenting whether it were not possible to do altogether without vowels. Sometimes he strings together quite a chain of impossibilities. The line, for example, at page 51,

> Or, only such as sea-shells flash

puts us much in mind of the school-boy stumbling-block, beginning: "The cat ran up the ladder with a lump of raw liver in her mouth," and we defy Sam Patch himself to pronounce it twice in succession without tumbling into a blunder.

But we are fairly wearied with this absurd theme. *Who* calls Mr. Ward a poet? He is a second-rate, or a third-rate, or perhaps a ninety-ninth-rate poetaster. He is a gentleman of "elegant leisure," and gentlemen of elegant leisure are, for the most part, neither men, women, nor Harriet Martineaus. Similar opinions, we believe, were expressed by somebody else—was it Mr. Benjamin?—no very long while ago. But neither Mr. Ward nor the *Knickerbocker* would be convinced. The latter, by way of defence, went into a treatise upon Sam Patch, and Mr. Ward, "in the nick of his glory," wrote another poem against criticism in general, in which he called Mr. Benjamin "a wasp" and "an owl," and endeavored to prove him an ass. An owl is a wise bird—especially in spectacles—still, we do not look upon Mr. Benjamin as an owl. If all are owls who disbelieve in this book (which we now throw to the pigs) then the world at large cuts a pretty figure, indeed, and should be burnt up in April, as Mr. Miller desires—for it is only one immense aviary of owls.

WILLIAM W. LORD.*

Of Mr. LORD we know nothing—although we believe

* POEMS. By William W. Lord. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

that he is a student at Princeton College—or perhaps a graduate, or perhaps a professor of that institution. Of his book, lately, we have heard a good deal—that is to say, we have heard it announced in every possible variation of phrase, as "forthcoming." For several months past, indeed, much amusement has been occasioned in the various literary coteries in New York, by the pertinacity and obviousness of an attempt made by the poet's friends to get up an anticipatory excitement in his favor. There were multitudinous dark rumors of something *in posse*—whispered insinuations that the sun had at length arisen or would certainly arise—that a book was really in press which would revolutionize the poetical world—that the MS. had been submitted to the inspection of a junto of critics, whose fiat was well understood to be Fate (Mr. Charles King, if we remember aright, forming one of the junto)—that the work had by them been approved, and its successful reception and illimitable glorification assured,—Mr. Longfellow, in consequence, countermanding an order given his publishers (Redding & Co.) to issue forthwith a new threepenny edition of "The Voices of the Night." Suggestions of this nature, busily circulated in private, were, in good time, insinuated through the press, until at length the public expectation was as much on tiptoe as public expectation, in America, can ever be expected to be about so small a matter as the issue of a volume of American poems. The climax of this whole effort, however, at forestalling the critical opinion, and by

far the most injudicious portion of the procedure, was the publishers' announcement of the forthcoming book as "a very remarkable volume of poems."

The fact is, the only remarkable things about Mr. Lord's compositions are their remarkable conceit, ignorance, impudence, platitude, stupidity, and bombast:—we are sorry to say all this, but there is an old adage about the falling of the heavens. Nor must we be misunderstood. We intend to wrong neither Mr. Lord nor our own conscience, by denying him particular merits—such as they are. His book is *not* altogether contemptible—although the conduct of his friends has inoculated nine tenths of the community with the opinion that it is—but what we wish to say is, that "remarkable" is by no means the epithet to be applied, in the way of commendation, either to any thing that he has yet done, or to any thing that he may hereafter accomplish. In a word, while he has undoubtedly given proof of a very ordinary species of talent, no man whose opinion is entitled to the slightest respect, will admit in him any indication of genius.

The "particular merits" to which, in the case of Mr. Lord, we have allusion, are merely the accidental merits of particular passages. We say *accidental*—because poetical merit which is not simply an accident, is very sure to be found, more or less, in a state of *diffusion* throughout a poem. No man is entitled to the sacred name of poet, because from 160 pages of doggerel, may be culled a few sentences of worth. Nor would the case be in any re-

spect altered, if these few sentences, or even if a few passages of length, were of an excellence even supreme. For a poet is necessarily a man of genius, and with the spirit of true genius even its veriest commonplaces are intertwined and inextricably intertangled. When, therefore, amid a Sahara of platitude, we discover an occasional Oasis, we must not so far forget ourselves as to fancy any latent fertility in the sands. It is our purpose, however, to do the fullest justice to Mr. Lord, and we proceed at once to cull from his book whatever, in our opinion, will put in the fairest light his poetical pretensions.

And first we extract the *one* brief passage which aroused in us what we recognized as the Poetical Sentiment. It occurs, at page 94, in "Saint Mary's Gift," which, although excessively unoriginal at all points, is, upon the whole, the least reprehensible poem of the volume. The heroine of the story having taken a sleeping draught, after the manner of Juliet, is conveyed to a vault (still in the same manner), and (still in the same manner) awakes in the presence of her lover, who comes to gaze on what he supposes her corpse:

> And each unto the other was a dream;
> And so they gazed without a stir or breath,
> *Until her head into the golden stream*
> *Of her wide tresses, loosened from their wreath,*
> *Sank back, as she did yield again to death.*

At page 3, in a composition of much general *eloquence*, there occur a few lines of which we should not hesitate to

speak enthusiastically were we not perfectly aware that Mr. Lord has no claim to their origination:

——— Ye winds
That in the impalpable deep caves of air,
Moving your silent plumes, in dreams of flight,
Tumultuous lie, and from your half-stretched wings
Beat the faint zephyrs that disturb the air!

At page 6, in the same poem, we meet also a passage of high merit, although sadly disfigured:

Thee the bright host of Heaven,
The stars adore:—a thousand altars, fed
By pure unwearied hands, like cressets blaze
In the blue depths of night; nor all unseen
In the pale sky of day, with tempered light
Burn *radiant of thy praise.*

The disfiguration to which we allude lies in the making a blazing altar burn merely like a blazing cresset—a simile about as forcible as would be the likening an apple to a pear, or the sea-foam to the froth on a pitcher of Burton's ale.

At page 7, still in the same poem, we find some verses which are very quotable, and will serve to make our readers understand what we mean by the eloquence of the piece:

Great Worshipper! hast thou no thought of Him
Who gave the Sun his brightness, winged the winds,
And on the everlasting deep bestowed
Its voiceless thunder—spread its fields of blue,
And made them glorious *like an inner sky*
From which the islands rise like steadfast clouds,
How beautiful! who gemmed thy zone with stars,

Around thee threw His own cerulean robe,—
And bent His coronal about thy brows,
Shaped of the seven splendors of the light—
Piled up the mountains for thy throne ; and thee
The image of His beauty made and power,
And gave thee to be sharer of His state,
His majesty, His glory, and His fear !

We extract this *not* because we like it ourselves, but because we take it for granted that there are many who will, and that Mr. Lord himself would desire us to extract it as a specimen of his *power*. The "Great Worshipper" is Nature. We disapprove, however, the man-milliner method in which she is tricked out, item by item. The "How beautiful!" should be understood, we fancy, as an expression of admiration on the part of Mr. Lord for the fine idea which immediately precedes—the idea which we have italicized. It is, in fact, by no means destitute of force—but we have met it before.

At page 70, there are two stanzas addressed to "My Sister." The first of these we cite as the best thing of equal length to be found in the book. Its conclusion is particularly noble.

And shall we meet in heaven, and know and love?
Do human feelings in that world above
Unchanged survive? blest thought! but ah, I fear
That thou, dear sister, in some other sphere,
Distant from mine will (wilt) find a brighter home,
Where I, unworthy found, may never come :—
Or be so high above the glorified,
That I a meaner angel, undescried,
Seeking thine eyes, such love alone shall see
As angels give to all bestowed on me ;

And when my voice upon thy ear shall fall,
Hear only such reply as angels give to all.

We give these lines as they are: their grammatical construction is faulty; and the punctuation of the ninth line renders the sense equivocal.

Of that species of composition which comes most appropriatedly under the head, *Drivel*, we should have no trouble in selecting as many specimens as our readers could desire. We will afflict them with one or two:

SONG.

O soft is the ringdove's eye of love
When her mate returns from a weary flight,
And brightest of all the stars above
Is the one bright star that leads the night.

But softer thine eye than the dove's by far,
When of friendship and pity thou speakest to me;
And brighter, O brighter, than eve's one star,
When of love, sweet maid, I speak to thee.

Here is another

SONG.

Oh, a heart it loves, it loves thee,
That never loved before;
Oh, a heart it loves, it loves thee,
That heart can love no more.

As the rose was in the bud, love,
Ere it opened into sight,
As yon star in drumlie daylight
Behind the blue was bright—

So thine image in my heart, love,
As pure, as bright, as fair,
Thyself unseen, unheeded,
I saw and loved it there.

Oh, a heart it loves, it loves thee
As heart ne'er loved before;
Oh, a heart, it loves, loves, loves thee,
That heart can love no more.

In the "Widow's Complaint" we are entertained after this fashion:

And what are these children
I once thought my own,
What now do they seem
But his orphans alone?

In "The New Castalia" we have it thus:

Then a pallid beauteous maiden
Golden ghastly robes arrayed in
Such a wondrous strain displayed in,
In a wondrous song of Aidenne,
That all the gods and goddesses
Shook their golden yellow tresses,
Parnassus' self made half afraid in.

Just above this there is something about aged beldames dreaming

—— of white throats sweetly jagged
With a ragged butch-knife dull,
And of night-mares neighing, weighing,
On a sleeper's bosom *squatting*.

But in mercy to our readers we forbear.

Mr. Lord is never elevated above the dead level of his habitual platitude, by even the happiest thesis in the world. That any man could, at one and the same time, fancy himself a poet and string together as many pitiable inanities as we see here, on so truly suggestive a thesis as that of "A Lady taking the Veil," is to our apprehension

a miracle of miracles. The idea would seem to be, of itself, sufficient to elicit fire from ice—to breathe animation into the most stolid of stone. Mr. Lord winds up a dissertation on the subject by the patronizing advice—

> Ere thou, irrevocable, to that dark creed
> Art yielded, *think*, *O Lady*, *think again*—

the whole of which would read better if it were

> Ere thou, irrevocable, to this d—d doggerel
> Art yielded, Lord, think ! think !—ah, think again !

Even with the great theme, Niagara, our poet fails in his obvious effort to work himself into a fit of inspiration. One of his poems has for title "A Hymn to Niagara"—but from beginning to end it is nothing more than a very silly "Hymn to Mr. Lord." Instead of describing the fall (as well as any Mr. Lord could be supposed to describe it) he rants about what *I* feel here, and about what *I* did not feel there—till at last the figure of little Mr. Lord, in the shape of a great capital, gets so thoroughly in between the reader and the waterfall that not a particle of the latter is to be discovered. At one point the poet directs his soul to issue a proclamation as follows:

> Proclaim, my soul, proclaim it to the sky !
> And tell the stars, and tell the hills whose feet
> Are in the depths of earth, their peaks in heaven,
> And tell the Ocean's old familiar face
> Beheld by day and night, in calm and storm,
> That they, nor aught beside in earth or heaven,
> Like thee, tremendous torrent, have so filled
> *Its* thought of beauty, and so awed with might !

The "*Its*" has reference to the soul of Mr. Lord, who thinks it necessary to issue a proclamation to the stars and the hills and the ocean's old familiar face—lest the stars and the hills and the ocean's old familiar face should chance to be unaware of the fact that it (the soul of Mr. Lord) admitted the waterfall to be a fine thing—but whether the cataract for the compliment, or the stars for the information, are to be considered the party chiefly obliged—that, for the life of us, we cannot tell.

From the "first impression" of the cataract, he says:

> At length my soul awaked—waked not again
> To be o'erpressed, o'ermastered, and engulphed,
> But of itself possessed, o'er all without
> Felt conscious mastery!
>
> And then
> Retired within, and self-withdrawn, I stood
> The twofold centre and informing soul
> Of one vast harmony of sights and sounds,
> And from that deep abyss, that rock-built shrine,
> Though mute my own frail voice, I poured a hymn
> Of "praise and gratulation" like the noise
> Of banded angels when they shout to wake
> Empyreal echoes!

That so vast a personage as Mr. Lord should not be o'ermastered by the cataract, but feel "conscious mastery over all without"—and over all within, too—is certainly nothing more than reasonable and proper—but then he should have left the detail of these little facts to the cataract or to some other uninterested individual—even Cicero has been held to blame for a want of modesty—and

although, to be sure, Cicero was not Mr. Lord, still Mr. Lord may be in danger of blame. He may have enemies (*very* little men !) who will pretend to deny that the "hymn of praise and gratulation" (if *this* is the hymn) bears at all points more than a partial resemblance to the "noise of banded angels when they shout to wake empyreal echoes." Not that *we* intend to deny it—but *they* will :—they are *very* little people and they *will.*

We have said that the "remarkable" feature, or at least one of the "remarkable" features of this volume is its platitude—its flatness. Whenever the reader meets any thing not decidedly flat, he may take it for granted at once, that it is stolen. When the poet speaks, for example, at page 148, of

> Flowers, of young poets the first words—

who can fail to remember the line in the "Merry Wives of Windsor."

> Fairies use flowers for their charactery ?

At page 10 he says :

> Great oaks their heavenward lifted arms stretch forth
> In suppliance !

The same thought will be found in "Pelham," where the author is describing the dead tree beneath which is committed the murder. The grossest plagiarisms, indeed, abound. We would have no trouble, even, in pointing out a score from our most unimportant self. At page 27, Mr. Lord says :

They, albeit with inward pain,
Who thought to sing thy dirge, must sing thy Pæan!

In a poem called "Lenore," we have it:

Avaunt! to-night my heart is light—no dirge will I upraise,
But waft the angel on her flight with a Pæan of old days.

At page 13, Mr. Lord says of certain flowers that

Ere beheld on Earth they gardened Heaven!

We print it as printed—note of admiration and all. In a poem called "Al Aaraaf" we have it thus:

————A gemmy flower,
Inmate of highest stars, where erst it shamed
All other loveliness :—'t was dropped from Heaven
And fell on gardens of the unforgiven
In Trebizond.

At page 57, Mr. Lord says:

On the old and haunted mountain,
There in dreams I dared to climb,
Where the clear Castalian fountain
(Silver fountain) ever tinkling
All the green around it sprinkling
Makes perpetual rhyme—
To my dream enchanted, golden,
Came a vision of the olden
Long-forgotten time.

There are no doubt many of our friends who will remember the commencement of our "Haunted Palace."

In the greenest of our valleys
By good angels tenanted,
Once a fair and stately palace
(Radiant palace) reared its head.
In the monarch Thought's dominion
It stood there.

Never seraph spread a pinion
  Over fabric half so fair.
Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
  On its roof did float and flow—
This—all this—was in the olden
  Time, long ago.

At page 60 Mr. Lord says:

And the aged beldames napping,
Dreamed of gently rapping, rapping,
With a hammer gently tapping,
  Tapping on an infant's skull.

In "The Raven," we have it:

While I pondered nearly napping,
Suddenly there came a rapping,
As of some one gently tapping,
  Tapping at my chamber door.

But it is folly to pursue these thefts. As to any property of our own, Mr. Lord is very cordially welcome to whatever use he can make of it. But others may not be so pacifically disposed, and the book before us might be very materially thinned and reduced in cost, by discarding from it all that belongs to Miss Barrett, Tennyson, Keats, Shelley, Proctor, Longfellow, and Lowell,—the very class of poets, by the way, whom Mr. William W. Lord, in his "New Castalia" the most especially affects to satirize and to contemn.

It has been rumored, we say, or rather it has been *announced* that Mr. Lord is a graduate or perhaps a professor of Princeton College—but we have had much difficulty in believing any thing of the kind. The pages before us

are not only utterly devoid of that classicism of tone and manner—that better species of classicism which a liberal education never fails to impart—but they abound in the most outrageously vulgar violations of grammar—of prosody in its most extended sense.

Of versification, and all that appertains to it, Mr. Lord is ignorant in the extreme. We doubt if he can tell the difference between a dactyl and an anapæst. In the heroic (iambic) pentameter he is continually introducing such verses as these:

A faint symphony to heaven ascending—

No heart of love, O God, Infinite One—

Of a thought as weak as aspiration—

Who were the original priests of this—

Of grace, magnificence, and power—

O'erwhelm me; this darkness that shuts out the sky—

Alexandrines, in the same metre, are encountered at every step—but it is very clear from the points at which they are met, and at which the cæsura is placed, that Mr. Lord has no idea of employing them as Alexandrines:—They are merely excessive, that is to say, defective pentameters. In a word, judging by his rhythm, we might suppose that the poet could neither see, hear, nor make use of his fingers. We do not know, in America, a versifier so utterly wretched and contemptible.

His most extraordinary sins, however, are in point of

English. Here is his dedication, embodied in the very first page of the book:

"To Professor Albert B. Dod, These Poems, the offspring of an Earnest (if ineffectual) Desire toward the True and Beautiful, which were hardly my own by Paternity, when they became his by Adoption, are inscribed, with all Reverence and Affection by the Author."

What is anybody to make of all this? What is the meaning of a desire *toward?*—and is it the "True and Beautiful" or the "Poems" which were hardly Mr. Lord's "own by paternity before they became his [Mr. Dod's] by adoption."

At page 12 we read:

> Think, heedless one, or who with wanton step
> *Tramples* the flowers.

At page 75, within the compass of eleven lines, we have three of the grossest blunders:

> O Thou for whom as in thyself Thou art,
> And by thyself perceived, we know no name,
> *Nor* dare *not* seek to express—but unto us,
> Adonai! who before the heavens were built
> Or Earth's foundation laid, within thyself,
> Thine own most glorious habitation *dwelt*,
> But when within the abyss,
> With sudden light illuminated,
> Thou, thine image to behold,
> Into its quickened depths
> *Looked* down with brooding eye!

At page 79 we read:

> But ah! my heart, unduteous to my will,
> Breathes only sadness: like an instrument

From whose quick strings, when hands devoid of skill
Solicit joy, *they* murmur and lament.

At page 86 is something even grosser than this:

And still and rapt as pictured saint might be,
Like saint-like seemed as *her* she did adore.

At page 129 there is a similar error:

With half-closed eyes and ruffled feathers known
As *them* that fly not with the changing year.

At page 128 we find:

And thou didst dwell therein so truly loved
As none have been nor shall be loved again,
And yet *perceived* not, etc.

At page 155 we have:

But yet it may not cannot be
That thou at length *hath* sunk to rest.

Invariably Mr. Lord writes didst did'st; couldst could'st, etc. The fact is he is absurdly ignorant of the commonest principles of grammar—and the only excuse we can make to our readers for annoying them with specifications in this respect is that, without the specifications, we should never have been believed.

But enough of this folly. We are heartily tired of the book, and thoroughly disgusted with the impudence of the parties who have been aiding and abetting in thrusting it before the public. To the poet himself we have only to say—from any further specimens of your stupidity, good Lord deliver us!

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

Mr. BRYANT'S position in the poetical world is, perhaps, better settled than that of any American. There is less difference of opinion about his rank; but, as usual, the agreement is more decided in private literary circles than in what appears to be the public expression of sentiment as gleaned from the press. I may as well observe here, too, that this coincidence of opinion in private circles is in all cases very noticeable when compared with the discrepancy of the apparent public opinion. In private it is quite a rare thing to find any strongly-marked disagreement—I mean, of course, about mere autorial merit. The author accustomed to seclusion, and mingling for the first time freely with the literary people about him, is invariably startled and delighted to find that the decisions of his own unbiassed judgment—decisions to which he has refrained from giving voice on account of their broad contradiction to the decision of the press—are sustained and considered quite as matters of course by almost every person with whom he converses. The fact is that, when brought face to face with each other, we are constrained to a certain amount of honesty by the sheer trouble it causes us to mould the countenance to a lie. We put on paper with a grave air what we could not for our lives assert personally to a friend without either blushing or laughing outright. That the opinion of the press is not an honest opinion, that necessarily it is impossible that it should be an honest opinion, is never denied by the

members of the press themselves. Individual presses, of course, are now and then honest, but I speak of the combined effect. Indeed, it would be difficult for those conversant with the *modus operandi* of public journals to deny the general falsity of impression conveyed. Let in America a book be published by an unknown, careless, or uninfluential author, if he publishes it "on his own account," he will be confounded at finding that no notice of it is taken at all. If it has been entrusted to a publisher of *caste*, there will appear forthwith in each of the leading *business* papers a variously-phrased *critique* to the extent of three or four lines, and to the effect that "we have received from the fertile press of So and So, a volume entitled 'This and That,' which appears to be well worthy perusal, and which is 'got up' in the customary neat style of the enterprising firm of So and So." On the other hand, let our author have acquired influence, experience, or (what will stand him in good stead of either) effrontery, on the issue of his book he will obtain from his publisher a hundred copies (or more, as the case may be) "for distribution among friends connected with the press." Armed with these, he will call personally either at the office or (if he understands his game) at the private residence of every editor within his reach, enter into conversation, compliment the journalist, interest him, as if incidentally, in the subject of the book, and finally, watching an opportunity, beg leave to hand him "a volume which, quite opportunely, is on the very matter now under discussion." If

the editor seems sufficiently interested, the rest is left to fate; but if there is any lukewarmness (usually indicated by a polite regret on the editor's part that he really has "no time to render the work that justice which its importance demands"), then our author is prepared to understand and to sympathize; has, luckily, a friend thoroughly conversant with the topic, and who (perhaps) could be persuaded to write some account of the volume—provided that the editor would be kind enough just to glance over the *critique* and amend it in accordance with his own particular views. Glad to fill half a column or so of his editorial space, and still more glad to get rid of his visitor, the journalist assents. The author retires, consults the friend, instructs him concerning the strong points of the volume, and insinuating in *some* shape a *quid pro quo*, gets an elaborate *critique* written (or, what is more usual and far more simple, writes it himself), and his business in this individual quarter is accomplished. Nothing more than sheer impudence is requisite to accomplish it in all.

Now the effect of this system (for it has really grown to be such) is obvious. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, men of genius, too indolent and careless about worldly concerns to bestir themselves after this fashion, have also that pride of intellect which would prevent them, under any circumstances, from even insinuating, by the presentation of a book to a member of the press, a desire to have that book reviewed. They, consequently, and their works are utterly overwhelmed and extinguished

in the flood of the *apparent* public adulation upon which, in gilded barges, are borne triumphant the ingenious toady and the diligent quack.

In general, the books of the toadies and quacks, not being read at all, are safe from any contradiction of this self-bestowed praise; but now and then it happens that the excess of the laudation works out in part its own remedy. Men of leisure, hearing one of the toady works commended, look at it, read its preface and a few pages of its body, and throw it aside with disgust, wondering at the ill taste of the *editors* who extol it. But there is an iteration and a continuous reiteration of the panegyric, till these men of leisure begin to suspect themselves in the wrong, to fancy that there may really be something good lying *perdu* in the volume. In a fit of desperate curiosity they read it through critically, their indignation growing hotter at each succeeding page till it gets the better even of contempt. The result is that reviews now appear in various quarters entirely at variance with the opinions so generally expressed, and which, but for these indignation reviews, would have passed universally current as the opinion of the public. It is in this manner that those gross *seeming* discrepancies arise which so often astonish us, but which vanish instantaneously in private society.

But although it may be said, in general, that Mr. Bryant's position is *comparatively* well settled, still, for some time past, there has been a growing tendency to underes-

timate him. The new licentious "schools" of poetry—I do not now speak of the transcendentalists, who are the merest nobodies, fatiguing even themselves—but the Tennysonian and Barrettian schools, having, in their rashness of spirit, much in accordance with the whole spirit of the age, thrown into the shade necessarily all that seems akin to the conservatism of half a century ago. The conventionalities, even the most justifiable *decora*, of composition, are regarded, *per se*, with a suspicious eye. When I say *per se*, I mean that, from finding them so long in connection with conservatism of thought, we have come at last to dislike them, not merely as the outward visible signs of that conservatism, but as things evil in themselves. It is very clear that those accuracies and elegancies of style and of general manner, which, in the time of Pope, were considered as *prima facie* and indispensable indications of genius, are now conversely regarded. How few are willing to admit the possibility of reconciling genius with artistic skill! Yet this reconciliation is not only possible, but an absolute necessity. It is a mere prejudice which has hitherto prevented the union, by studiously insisting upon a natural repulsion which not only does not exist, but which is at war with all the analogies of nature. The greatest poems will not be written until this prejudice is annihilated; and I mean to express a very exalted opinion of Mr. Bryant when I say that his works in time to come will do much toward the annihilation.

I have never disbelieved in the perfect consistency, and even congeniality, of the highest genius and the profoundest art; but in the case of the author of "The Ages," I *have* fallen into the general error of undervaluing his poetic ability on account of the mere "elegances and accuracies" to which allusion has already been made. I confess that, with an absolute abstraction from all personal feelings, and with the most sincere intention to do justice, I was at one period beguiled into this popular error; there can be no difficulty, therefore, on my part, in excusing the inadvertence in others.

It will never do to claim for Bryant a genius of the loftiest order, but there has been latterly, since the days of Mr. Longfellow and Mr. Lowell, a growing disposition to deny him *genius* in *any* respect. He is now commonly spoken of as "a man of high poetical *talent*, very '*correct*,' with a warm appreciation of the beauty of nature and great descriptive powers, but rather too much of the old-school manner of Cowper, Goldsmith, and Young." This is the truth, but not the whole truth. Mr. Bryant has genius, and that of a marked character, but it has been overlooked by modern schools, because deficient in those externals which have become in a measure symbolical of those schools.

Dr. Griswold, in summing up his comments on Bryant, has the following significant objections: "His genius is not versatile; he has related no history; he has not sung of the passion of love; he has not described artificial life.

Still the tenderness and feeling in 'The Death of the Flowers,' 'Rizpah,' 'The Indian Girl's Lament,' and other pieces, show that he might have excelled in delineations of the gentler passions had he made them his study."

Now, in describing *no* artificial life, in relating *no* history, in *not* singing the passion of love, the poet has merely shown himself the profound artist, has merely evinced a proper consciousness that such are not the legitimate themes of poetry. That they are not, I have repeatedly shown, or attempted to show, and to go over the demonstration now would be foreign to the gossiping and desultory nature of the present article. What Dr. Griswold means by "the gentler passions" is, I presume, not very clear to himself, but it is possible that he employs the phrase in consequence of the gentle, unpassionate emotion induced by the poems of which he quotes the titles. It is precisely this "unpassionate emotion" which is the limit of the true poetical art. Passion proper and poesy are discordant. Poetry, in elevating, tranquilizes *the soul.* With *the heart* it has nothing to do. For a fuller explanation of these views I refer the reader to an analysis of a poem by Mrs. Welby—an analysis contained in an article called "Marginalia," and published about a year ago in *The Democratic Review.*

The editor of "The Poets and Poetry of America" thinks the literary precocity of Bryant remarkable. "There are few recorded *more* remarkable," he says. The first edition of "The Embargo" was in 1808, and

the poet was born in 1794; he was more than thirteen, then, when the satire was printed—although it is reported to have been written a year earlier. I quote a few lines:

> Oh, might some patriot rise, the gloom dispel,
> Chase Error's mist and break the magic spell!
> But vain the wish; for, hark! the murmuring meed
> Of hoarse applause from yonder shed proceed.
> Enter and view the thronging concourse there.
> Intent with gaping mouth and stupid stare;
> While in the midst their supple leader stands,
> Harangues aloud and flourishes his hands,
> To adulation tunes his servile throat,
> And sues successful for each blockhead's vote.

This is a fair specimen of the whole, both as regards its satirical and rhythmical power. A satire is, of course, no *poem*. I have known boys of an earlier age do better things, although the case is rare. All depends upon the course of education. Bryant's father "was familiar with the best English literature, and perceiving in his son indications of superior genius, attended carefully to his instruction, taught him the art of composition, and guided his literary taste." This being understood, the marvel of such verse as I have quoted ceases at once, even admitting it to be thoroughly the boy's own work; but it is difficult to make any such admission. The father *must* have suggested, revised, retouched.

The longest poem of Bryant is "The Ages" thirty-five Spenserian stanzas. It is the one improper theme of its author. The design is, "from a survey of the past ages of the world, and of the successive advances of mankind

in knowledge and virtue, to justify and confirm the hopes of the philanthropist for the future destinies of the human race." All this would have been more rationally, because more effectually, accomplished in prose. Dismissing it as a poem (which in its general tendency it is not), one might commend the force of its argumentation but for the radical error of deducing a hope of *progression* from the *cycles* of physical nature.

The sixth stanza is a specimen of noble versification (within the narrow limits of the iambic pentameter).

> Look on this beautiful world and read the truth
> In her fair page ; see, every season brings
> New change to her of everlasting youth ;
> Still the green soil with joyous living things
> Swarms ; the wide air is full of joyous wings :
> And myriads still are happy in the sleep
> Of Ocean's azure gulfs and where he flings
> The restless surge. Eternal Love doth keep
> In his complacent arms the earth, the air, the deep.

The cadences here at *page*, *swarms*, and *surge*, cannot be surpassed. There are comparatively few consonants. Liquids and the softer vowels abound, and the partial line after the pause at "surge," with the stately march of the succeeding Alexandrine, is one of the finest conceivable *finales*.

The poem, in general, has unity, completeness. Its tone of calm, elevated, and hopeful contemplation is well sustained throughout. There is an occasional quaint grace of expression, as in

> Nurse of full streams and lifter up of proud
> Sky-mingling mountains that o'erlook the cloud !

or of antithetical and rhythmical force combined, as in

> The shock that hurled
> To dust, in many fragments dashed and strown
> The throne whose roots were in another world
> And whose far-stretching shadow awed our own.

But we look in vain for any thing more worthy commendation.

"Thanatopsis" is the poem by which its author is best known, but is by no means his best poem. It owes the *extent* of its celebrity to its nearly absolute freedom from *defect*, in the ordinary understanding of the term. I mean to say that its negative merit recommends it to the public attention. It is a thoughtful, well phrased, well constructed, well versified poem. The concluding thought is exceedingly noble, and has done wonders for the success of the whole composition.

"The Waterfowl" is very beautiful, but, like "Thanatopsis," owes a great deal to its completeness and pointed termination.

"Oh, Fairest of the Rural Maids!" will strike every poet as the truest *poem* written by Bryant. It is richly ideal.

"June" is sweet and perfectly well modulated in its rhythm, and inexpressibly pathetic. It serves well to illustrate my previous remarks about the passion in its connection with poetry. In "June" there is, very properly, nothing of the intense *passion* of grief, but the subdued sorrow which comes up, as if perforce, to the surface

of the poet's gay sayings about his grave, we find thrilling us to the soul, while there is yet a spiritual *elevation* in the thrill.

And what if cheerful shouts at noon
Come, from the village sent,
Or songs of maids beneath the moon
With fairy laughter blent?
And what if, in the evening light,
Betrothed lovers walk in sight
Of my low monument?
I would the lovely scene around
Might know no sadder sight nor sound.
I know—I know I should not see
The season's glorious show,
Nor would its brightness shine for me,
Nor its wild music flow;
But if around my place of sleep
The friends I love should come to weep,
They might not haste to go:
Soft airs, and song, and light, and bloom,
Should keep them lingering by my tomb.

The thoughts here belong to the highest class of poetry, the imaginative-natural, and are of themselves sufficient to stamp their author a man of genius.

I copy at random a few passages of similar cast, inducing a similar conviction:

The great heavens
Seem to stoop down upon the scene in love,
A nearer vault and of a tenderer blue
Than that which bends above the eastern hills. . . .

Till twilight blushed, and lovers walked and wooed
In a forgotten language, and *old tunes,*
From instruments of unremembered form,
Gave the soft winds a voice. . . .

Breezes of the south
That toss the golden and the flame-like flowers,
And pass the prairie hawk, that, poised on high,
Flaps his broad wings, yet moves not. . . .

On the breast of earth
I lie, and listen to her mighty voice—
A voice of many tones sent up from streams
That wander through the gloom, from woods unseen
Swayed by the sweeping of the tides of air;
From rocky chasms where darkness dwells all day,
And hollows of the great invisible hills,
And sands that edge the ocean, stretching far
Into the night—a melancholy sound!. . . .

All the green herbs
Are stirring in his breath; *a thousand flowers,*
By the road side and the borders of the brook,
Nod gayly to each other.

[There is a fine "echo of sound to sense" in "the borders of the brook," etc.; and in the same poem from which these lines are taken ("The Summer Wind") may be found two other equally happy examples, *e. g.*

For me, I lie
Languidly in the shade, where the thick turf,
Yet virgin from the kisses of the sun,
Retains some freshness.

And again—

All is silent, save the faint
And interrupted murmur of the bee
Settling on the sick flowers, and then again
Instantly on the wing.

I resume the imaginative extracts.]

Paths, homes, graves, ruins from the lowest glen
To where life shrinks from the fierce Alpine air.

And the blue gentian flower that in the breeze
Nods lonely, of her beauteous race the last. . . .

A shoot of that old vine that made
The nations silent in the shade. . . .

But 'neath yon crimson tree,
Lover to listening maid might breathe his flame
Nor mark within its roseate canopy,
Her flush of maiden shame. . . .

The mountains that infold,
In their wild sweep, the colored landscape round,
Seem *groups of giant kings in purple and gold*
That guard the enchanted ground.

[This latter passage is especially beautiful. Happily to endow inanimate nature with sentience and a capability of action, is one of the severest tests of the poet.]

. . . .There is a power whose care
Teaches thy way along *that pathless coast,*
The desert and illimitable air,
Lone, wandering, but not lost. . . .

Pleasant shall be thy way, *where meekly bows*
The shutting flowers, and darkling waters pass
And 'twixt the o'ershadowing branches and the grass. . . .

Sweet odors in the sea air, sweet and strange
Shall tell the home-sick mariner of the shore,
And, listening to thy murmur, he shall deem
He hears the rustling leaf and running stream. . . .

In a sonnet, "To ——," are some richly imaginative lines. We quote the whole.

Ay, thou art for the grave; thy glances shine
Too brightly to shine long: another spring
Shall deck her for men's eyes, but not for thine,
Sealed in a sleep which knows no waking.

The fields for thee have no medicinal leaf,
And the vexed ore no mineral of power;
And they who love thee wait in anxious grief
Till the slow plague shall bring the fatal hour.
Glide softly to thy rest, then: death should come
Gently to one of gentle mould like thee,
As light winds wandering through groves of bloom
Detach the delicate blossom from the tree,
Close thy sweet eyes calmly and without pain,
And we will trust in God to see thee yet again.

The happiest *finale* to these brief extracts will be the magnificent conclusion of "Thanatopsis."

So live, that, when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan that moves
To that mysterious realm where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not like the quarry slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave—
Like one that draws the drapery of his couch
About him and lies down to pleasant dreams.

In the minor morals of the muse Mr. Bryant excels. In versification (*as far as he goes*) he is unsurpassed in America—unless, indeed, by Mr. Sprague. Mr. Longfellow is not so thorough a versifier within Mr. Bryant's limits, but a far better one, upon the whole, on account of his greater range. Mr. B., however, is by no means always accurate —or defensible, for accurate is not the term. His lines are occasionally unpronounceable through excess of harsh consonants, as in

As if they loved to breast the breeze that sweeps the cool clear sky.

Now and then he gets out of his depth in attempting anapæstic rhythm, of which he makes sad havoc, as in

> And Rispah, once the loveliest of all
> That bloomed and smiled in the court of Saul.

Not unfrequently, too, even his pentameters are inexcusably rough, as in

> Kind influence. Lo! their orbs burn more bright.

which can only be read metrically by drawing out "influence" into three marked syllables, shortening the long monosyllable "Lo!" and lengthening the short one "their."

Mr. Bryant is not devoid of mannerisms, one of the most noticeable of which is his use of the epithet "old" preceded by some other adjective, *e. g.*—

> In all that proud old world beyond the deep; . . .
> There is a tale about these gray old rocks; . . .
> The wide old woods resounded with her song; . . .
> And from the gray old trunks that high in heaven,

etc. etc. etc. These duplicates occur so frequently as to excite a smile upon each repetition.

Of merely grammatical errors the poet is rarely guilty. Faulty constructions are more frequently chargeable to him. In "The Massacre of Scio" we read—

> Till the last link of slavery's chain
> Is shivered to be worn no more.

What shall be worn no more? The chain, of course—but the link is implied. It will be understood that I pick these flaws only with difficulty from the poems of Bryant. He is, in the "minor morals," the most generally correct of our poets.

He is now fifty-two years of age. In height, he is, perhaps, five feet nine. His frame is rather robust. His features are large but thin. His countenance is sallow, nearly bloodless. His eyes are piercing gray, deep set, with large projecting eyebrows. His mouth is wide and massive, the expression of the smile hard, cold—even sardonic. The forehead is broad, with prominent organs of ideality; a good deal bald; the hair thin and grayish, as are also the whiskers, which he wears in a simple style. His bearing is quite distinguished, full of the aristocracy of intellect. In general, he looks in better health than before his last visit to England. He seems active—physically and morally energetic. His dress is plain to the extreme of simplicity, although of late there is a certain degree of Anglicism about it.

In character no man stands more loftily than Bryant. The peculiarly melancholy expression of his countenance has caused him to be accused of harshness, or coldness of heart. Never was there a greater mistake. His soul is charity itself, in all respects generous and noble. His manners are undoubtedly reserved.

Of late days he has nearly, if not altogether abandoned literary pursuits, although still editing, with unabated vigor, *The New York Evening Post*. He is married, (Mrs. Bryant still living), has two daughters (one of them Mrs. Parke Godwin), and is residing for the present at Vice-Chancellor McCoun's, near the junction of Warren and Church streets.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.*

The reputation of the author of "Twice-Told Tales" has been confined, until very lately, to literary society; and I have not been wrong, perhaps, in citing him as *the* example, *par excellence*, in this country, of the privately admired and publicly unappreciated man of genius. Within the last year or two, it is true, an occasional critic has been urged, by honest indignation, into very warm approval. Mr. Webber, for instance, (than whom no one has a keener relish for that kind of writing which Mr. Hawthorne has best illustrated,) gave us, in a late number of *The American Review*, a cordial and certainly a full tribute to his talents; and since the issue of the "Mosses from an Old Manse," criticisms of similar tone have been by no means infrequent in our more authoritative journals. I can call to mind few reviews of Hawthorne published *before* the "Mosses." One I remember in *Arcturus* (edited by Mathews and Duyckinck) for May, 1841; another in the *American Monthly* (edited by Hoffman Herbert) for March, 1838; a third in the ninety-sixth number of the *North American Review*. These criticisms, however, seemed to have little effect on the popular taste —at least, if we are to form any idea of the popular taste by reference to its expression in the newspapers, or by the sale of the author's book. It was never the fashion (until

* "Twice-Told Tales." By Nathaniel Hawthorne. James Munro & Co., Boston. 1842.

"Mosses from an Old Manse." By Nathaniel Hawthorne. Wiley & Putnam, New York. 1846.

lately) to speak of him in any summary of our best authors.

The daily critics would say, on such occasions: "Is there not Irving, and Cooper, and Bryant, and Paulding, and—Smith?" or: "Have we not Halleck, and Dana, and Longfellow, and—Thompson?" or: "Can we not point triumphantly to our own Sprague, Willis, Channing, Bancroft, Prescott, and—Jenkins?" but these unanswerable queries were never wound up by the name of Hawthorne.

Beyond doubt, this inappreciation of him on the part of the public arose chiefly from the two causes to which I have referred—from the facts that he is neither a man of wealth nor a quack; but these are insufficient to account for the whole effect. No small portion of it is attributable to the very marked idiosyncrasy of Mr. Hawthorne himself. In one sense, and in great measure, to be peculiar is to be original, and than the true originality there is no higher literary virtue. This true or commendable originality, however, implies not the uniform but the continuous peculiarity,—a peculiarity springing from ever-active vigor of fancy,—better still if from ever-present force of imagination, giving its own hue, its own character to every thing it touches, and, especially, *self-impelled to touch every thing.*

It is often said, inconsiderately, that very original writers always fail in popularity—that such and such persons are too original to be comprehended by the mass. "Too peculiar" should be the phrase,—"too idiosyncratic." It is, in fact, the excitable, undisciplined, and

child-like popular mind which most keenly feels the original.

The criticism of the conservatives, of the hackneys, of the cultivated old clergymen of the *North American Review*, is precisely the criticism which condemns and alone condemns it. "It becometh not a divine," saith Lord Coke, "to be of a fiery and salamandrine spirit." Their conscience allowing them to move nothing themselves, these dignitaries have a holy horror of being moved. "Give us *quietude*," they say. Opening their mouths with proper caution, they sigh forth the word "*Repose*." And this is, indeed, the one thing they should be permitted to enjoy, if only upon the Christian principle of give and take.

The fact is that, if Mr. Hawthorne were really original, he could not fail of making himself felt by the public. But the fact is, he is *not* original in any sense. Those who speak of him as original mean nothing more than that he differs in his manner or tone, and in his choice of subjects, from any author of their acquaintance—their acquaintance not extending to the German Tieck, whose manner, in *some* of his works, is absolutely identical with that *habitual* to Hawthorne. But it is clear that the element of the literary originality is novelty. The element of its appreciation by the reader is the reader's sense of the new. Whatever gives him a new and insomuch a pleasurable emotion, he considers original, and whoever frequently gives him such emotion he considers an origi-

nal writer. In a word, it is by the sum total of these emotions that he decides upon the writer's claim to originality. I may observe here, however, that there is clearly a point at which even novelty itself would cease to produce the legitimate originality, if we judge this originality, as we should, by the effect designed: this point is that at which *novelty becomes nothing novel;* and here the artist, *to preserve his originality*, will subside into the commonplace. No one, I think, has noticed that, merely through inattention to this matter, Moore has comparatively failed in his "Lalla Rookh." Few readers, and indeed few critics, have commended this poem for originality,—and, in fact, the effect, originality, is not produced by it,—yet no work of equal size so abounds in the happiest originalities, individually considered. They are so excessive as, in the end, to deaden in the reader all capacity for their appreciation.

These points properly understood, it will be seen that the critic (unacquainted with Tieck) who reads a single tale or essay by Hawthorne may be justified in thinking him original; but the tone, or manner, or choice of subject, which induces in this critic the sense of the new, will —if not in a second tale, at least in a third and all subsequent ones—not only fail of inducing it, but bring about an exactly antagonistic impression. In concluding a volume, and more especially in concluding all the volumes of the author, the critic will abandon his first design of calling him "original," and content himself with styling him "peculiar."

With the vague opinion that to be original is to be unpopular, I could, indeed, agree, were I to adopt an understanding of originality which, to my surprise, I have known adopted by many who have a right to be called critical. They have limited, in a love for mere words, the literary to the metaphysical originality. They regard as original in letters, only such combinations of thought, of incident, and so forth, as are, in fact, absolutely novel. It is clear, however, not only that it is the novelty of *effect* alone which is worth consideration, but that this effect is *best* wrought, for the end of all fictitious composition, pleasure, by shunning rather than by seeking the absolute novelty of combination. Originality, thus understood, tasks and startles the intellect, and so brings into undue action the faculties to which, in the lighter literature, we least appeal. And thus understood it cannot fail to prove unpopular with the masses, who, seeking in this literature amusement, are positively offended by instruction. But the true originality—true in respect of its purposes—is that which, in bringing out the half-formed, the reluctant, or the unexpressed fancies of mankind, or in exciting the more delicate pulses of the heart's passion, or in giving birth to some universal sentiment or instinct in embryo, thus combines with the pleasurable effect of *apparent* novelty, a real egotistic delight. The reader, in the case first supposed (that of the absolute novelty), is excited, but embarrassed, disturbed, in some degree even pained, at his own want of perception, at his own folly in not hav-

ing himself hit upon the idea. In the second case his pleasure is doubled. He is filled with an intrinsic and extrinsic delight. He feels and intensely enjoys the seeming novelty of the thought, enjoys it as really novel, as absolutely original with the writer—*and* himself. They two, he fancies, have, alone of all men, thought thus. They two have, together, created this thing. Henceforward there is a bond of sympathy between them—a sympathy which irradiates every subsequent page of the book.

There is a species of writing which, with some difficulty, may be admitted as a lower degree of what I have called the true original. In its perusal, we say to ourselves, not "how original this is!" nor "here is an idea which I and the author have alone entertained," but "here is a charmingly obvious fancy," or sometimes even, "here is a thought which I am not sure has ever occurred to myself, but which, of course has occurred to all the rest of the world." This kind of composition (which still appertains to a high order) is usually designated as "the natural." It has little external resemblance, but strong internal affinity, to the true original, if, indeed, as I have suggested, it is not of this latter an inferior degree. It is best exemplified among English writers in Addison, Irving, and *Hawthorne*. The "ease" which is so often spoken of as its distinguishing feature, it has been the fashion to regard as ease in appearance alone, as a point of really difficult attainment. This idea, however, must

be received with some reservation. The natural style is difficult only to those who should never intermeddle with it—to the unnatural. It is but the result of writing with the understanding, or with the instinct, that the *tone*, in composition, should be that which, at any given point or upon any given topic, would be the tone of the great mass of humanity. The author who, after the manner of the "North Americans," is merely at *all* times *quiet*, is, of course, upon *most* occasions, merely silly or stupid, and has no more right to be thought "easy" or "natural" than has a cockney exquisite, or the sleeping beauty in the wax-works.

The "peculiarity" or sameness, or monotone of Hawthorne would, in its mere character of "peculiarity," and without reference to what *is* the peculiarity, suffice to deprive him of all chance of popular appreciation. But at his failure to be appreciated, we can, *of course*, no longer wonder when we find him monotonous at decidedly the worst of all possible points—at that point which, having the least concern with nature, is the farthest removed from the popular intellect, from the popular sentiment, and from the popular taste. I allude to the strain of allegory which completely overwhelms the greater number of his subjects, and which in some measure interferes with the direct conduct of absolutely all.

In defence of allegory (however or for whatever object employed) there is scarcely one respectable word to be said. Its best appeals are made to the fancy—that is to

say, to our sense of adaptation, not of matters proper, but of matters improper, for the purpose, of the real with the unreal; having never more of intelligible connection than has something with nothing, never half so much of effective affinity as has the substance for the shadow. The deepest emotion aroused within us by the happiest allegory, *as* allegory, is a very, very imperfectly satisfied sense of the writer's ingenuity in overcoming a difficulty we should have preferred his not having attempted to overcome. The fallacy of the idea that allegory, in any of its moods, can be made to enforce a truth—that metaphor, for example, may illustrate as well as embellish an argument—could be promptly demonstrated; the converse of the supposed fact might be shown, indeed, with very little trouble—but these are topics foreign to my present purpose. One thing is clear, that if allegory ever establishes a fact, it is by dint of overturning a fiction. Where the suggested meaning runs through the obvious one in a *very* profound under-current, so as never to interfere with the upper one without our own volition, so as never to show itself unless *called* to the surface, there only, for the proper uses of fictitious narrative, is it available at all. Under the best circumstances, it must always interfere with that unity of effect which, to the artist, is worth all the allegory in the world. Its vital injury, however, is rendered to the most vitally important point in fiction—that of earnestness or verisimilitude. That "The Pilgrim's Progress" is a ludicrously over-rated book, owing its seem-

ing popularity to one or two of those accidents in critical literature which by the critical are sufficiently well understood, is a matter upon which no two thinking people disagree; but the pleasure derivable from it, in any sense, will be found in the direct ratio of the reader's capacity to smother its true purpose, in the direct ratio of his ability to keep the allegory out of sight, or of his *in*ability to comprehend it. Of allegory properly handled, judiciously subdued, seen only as a shadow or by suggestive glimpses, and making its nearest approach to truth in a not obtrusive and therefore not unpleasant *appositeness*, the "Undine" of De La Motte Fouqué is the best, and undoubtedly a very remarkable specimen.

The obvious causes, however, which have prevented Mr. Hawthorne's *popularity*, do not suffice to condemn him in the eyes of the few who belong properly to books, and to whom books, perhaps, do not quite so properly belong. These few estimate an author, not as do the public, altogether by what he does, but in great measure—indeed, even in the greatest measure—by what he evinces a capability of doing. In this view, Hawthorne stands among literary people in America much in the same light as did Coleridge in England. The few, also, through a certain warping of the taste, which long pondering upon books as books merely never fails to induce, are not in a condition to view the errors of a scholar as errors altogether. At any time these gentlemen are prone to think the public not right rather than an educated author

wrong. But the simple truth is, that the writer who aims at impressing the people is *always* wrong when he fails in forcing that people to receive the impression. How far Mr. Hawthorne has addressed the people at all is, of course, not a question for me to decide. His books afford strong internal evidence of having been written to himself and his particular friends alone.

There has long existed in literature a fatal and unfounded prejudice, which it will be the office of this age to overthrow—the idea that the mere bulk of a work must enter largely into our estimate of its merit. I do not suppose even the weakest of the quarterly reviewers weak enough to maintain that in a book's size or mass, abstractly considered, there is any thing which especially calls for our admiration. A mountain, simply through the sensation of physical magnitude which it conveys, does, indeed, affect us with a sense of the sublime, but we cannot admit any such influence in the contemplation even of "The Columbiad." The quarterlies themselves will not admit it. And yet, what else are we to understand by their continual prating about "sustained effort"? Granted that this sustained effort has accomplished an epic—let us then admire the effort, (if this be a thing admirable,) but certainly not the epic on the effort's account. Common sense, in the time to come, may possibly insist upon measuring a work of art rather by the object it fulfils, by the impression it makes, than by the time it took to fulfil the object, or by the extent of "sustained

effort" which became necessary to produce the impression. The fact is, that perseverance is one thing and genius quite another; nor can all the transcendentalists in heathendom confound them.

The pieces in the volume entitled "Twice-Told Tales" are now in their third republication, and, of course, are thrice-told. Moreover, they are by no means *all* tales, either in the ordinary or in the legitimate understanding of the term. Many of them are pure essays; for example, "Sights from a Steeple," "Sunday at Home," "Little Annie's Ramble," "A Rill from the Town-Pump," "The Toll-Gatherer's Day." "The Haunted Mind," "The Sister Years," "Snow-Flakes," "Night Sketches," and "Footprints on the Sea-Shore." I mention these matters chiefly on account of their discrepancy with that marked precision and finish by which the body of the work is distinguished.

Of the essays just named, I must be content to speak in brief. They are each and all beautiful, without being characterized by the polish and adaptation so visible in the tales proper. A painter would at once note their leading or predominant feature, and style it *repose*. There is no attempt at effect. All is quiet, thoughtful, subdued. Yet this repose may exist simultaneously with high originality of thought; and Mr. Hawthorne has demonstrated the fact. At every turn we meet with novel combinations; yet these combinations never surpass the limits of the quiet. We are soothed as we read; and withal is a

calm astonishment that ideas so apparently obvious have never occurred or been presented to us before. Herein our author differs materially from Lamb or Hunt or Hazlitt—who, with vivid originality of manner and expression have less of the true novelty of thought than is generally supposed, and whose originality, at best, has an uneasy and meretricious quaintness, replete with startling effects unfounded in nature, and inducing trains of reflection which lead to no satisfactory result. The essays of Hawthorne have much of the character of Irving, with more of originality, and less of finish; while, compared with the *Spectator*, they have a vast superiority at all points. The *Spectator*, Mr. Irving, and Hawthorne have in common that tranquil and subdued manner which I have chosen to denominate *repose;* but, in the case of the two former, this repose is attained rather by the absence of novel combination, or of originality, than otherwise, and consists chiefly in the calm, quiet, unostentatious expression of commonplace thoughts, in an unambitious, unadulterated Saxon. In them, by strong effort, we are made to conceive the absence of all. In the essays before me the absence of effort is too obvious to be mistaken, and a strong under-current of *suggestion* runs continuously beneath the upper stream of the tranquil thesis. In short, these effusions of Mr. Hawthorne are the product of a truly imaginative intellect, restrained, and in some measure repressed, by fastidiousness of taste, by constitutional melancholy, and by indolence.

But it is of his tales that I desire principally to speak. The tale proper, in my opinion, affords unquestionably the fairest field for the exercise of the loftiest talent, which can be afforded by the wide domains of mere prose. Were I bidden to say how the highest genius could be most advantageously employed for the best display of its own powers, I should answer, without hesitation—in the composition of a rhymed poem, not to exceed in length what might be perused in an hour. Within this limit alone can the highest order of true poetry exist. I need only here say, upon this topic, that, in almost all classes of composition, the unity of effect or impression is a point of the greatest importance. It is clear, moreover, that this unity cannot be thoroughly preserved in productions whose perusal cannot be completed at one sitting. We may continue the reading of a prose composition, from the very nature of prose itself, much longer than we can persevere, to any good purpose, in the perusal of a poem. This latter, if truly fulfilling the demands of the poetic sentiment, induces an exaltation of the soul which cannot be long sustained. All high excitements are necessarily transient. Thus a long poem is a paradox. And without unity of impression the deepest effects cannot be brought about. Epics were the offspring of an imperfect sense of Art, and their reign is no more. A poem *too* brief may produce a vivid, but never an intense or enduring, impression. Without a certain continuity of effort—without a certain duration or repetition of purpose—the soul is

never deeply moved. There must be the dropping of the water upon the rock. De Béranger has wrought brilliant things—pungent and spirit-stirring—but, like all immassive bodies, they lack *momentum*, and thus fail to satisfy the poetic sentiment. They sparkle and excite, but, from want of continuity, fail deeply to impress. Extreme brevity will degenerate into epigrammatism; but the sin of extreme length is even more unpardonable. *In medio tutissimus ibis.*

Were I called upon, however, to designate that class of composition which, next to such a poem as I have suggested, should best fulfil the demands of high genius—should offer it the most advantageous field of exertion—I should unhesitatingly speak of the prose tale, as Mr. Hawthorne has here exemplified it. I allude to the short prose narrative, requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal. The ordinary novel is objectionable, from its length, for reasons already stated in substance. As it cannot be read at one sitting, it deprives itself, of course, of the immense force derivable from *totality*. Worldly interests intervening during the pauses of perusal, modify, annul, or counteract, in a greater or less degree, the impressions of the book. But simple cessation in reading would, of itself, be sufficient to destroy the true unity. In the brief tale, however, the author is enabled to carry out the fulness of his intention, be it what it may. During the hour of perusal the soul of the reader is at the writer's control. There are no external

or extrinsic influences—resulting from weariness or interruption.

A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single *effect* to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents—he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction. The idea of the tale has been presented unblemished, because undisturbed; and this is an end unattainable by the novel. Undue brevity is just as exceptionable here as in the poem; but undue length is yet more to be avoided.

We have said that the tale has a point of superiority even over the poem. In fact, while the *rhythm* of this latter is an essential aid in the development of the poem's highest idea—the idea of the beautiful—the artificialities of this rhythm are an inseparable bar to the development of all points of thought or expression which have their basis in *truth*. But truth is often, and in very great degree, the aim of the tale. Some of the finest tales are

tales of ratiocination. Thus the field of this species of composition, if not in so elevated a region on the mountain of mind, is a table-land of far vaster extent than the domain of the mere poem. Its products are never so rich, but infinitely more numerous, and more appreciable by the mass of mankind. The writer of the prose tale, in short, may bring to his theme a vast variety of modes or inflections of thought or expression (the ratiocinative, for example, the sarcastic or the humorous), which are not only antagonistical to the nature of the poem, but absolutely forbidden by one of its most peculiar and indispensable adjuncts; we allude, of course, to rhythm. It may be added, here, *par parenthèse*, that the author who aims at the purely beautiful in a prose tale is laboring at a great disadvantage. For beauty can be better treated in the poem. Not so with terror, or passion, or horror, or a multitude of such other points. And here it will be seen how full of prejudice are the usual animadversions against those *tales of effect*, many fine examples of which were found in the earlier numbers of *Blackwood*. The impressions produced were wrought in a legitimate sphere of action, and constituted a legitimate although sometimes an exaggerated interest. They were relished by every man of genius; although there were found many men of genius who condemned them without just ground. The true critic will but demand that the design intended be accomplished, to the fullest extent, by the means most advantageously applicable.

We have very few American tales of real merit—we may say, indeed, none, with the exception of "The Tales of a Traveller" of Washington Irving, and these "Twice-Told Tales" of Mr. Hawthorne. Some of the pieces of Mr. John Neal abound in vigor and originality; but in general his compositions of this class are excessively diffuse, extravagant, and indicative of an imperfect sentiment of art. Articles at random are, now and then, met with in our periodicals which might be advantageously compared with the best effusions of the British magazines; but, upon the whole, we are far behind our progenitors in this department of literature.

Of Mr. Hawthorne's tales we would say, emphatically, that they belong to the highest region of art—an art subservient to genius of a very lofty order. We had supposed, with good reason for so supposing, that he had been thrust into his present position by one of the impudent *cliques* which beset our literature, and whose pretensions it is our full purpose to expose at the earliest opportunity; but we have been most agreeably mistaken. We know of few compositions which the critic can more honestly commend than these "Twice-Told Tales." As Americans, we feel proud of the book.

Mr. Hawthorne's distinctive trait is invention, creation, imagination, originality—a trait which, in the literature of fiction, is positively worth all the rest. But the nature of the originality, so far as regards its manifestation in letters, is but imperfectly understood. The inventive or

original mind as frequently displays itself in novelty of *tone* as in novelty of matter. Mr. Hawthorne is original in *all* points.

It would be a matter of some difficulty to designate the best of these tales; we repeat that, without exception, they are beautiful. "Wakefield" is remarkable for the skill with which an old idea—a well-known incident—is worked up or discussed. A man of whims conceives the purpose of quitting his wife and residing *incognito*, for twenty years, in her immediate neighborhood. Something of this kind actually happened in London. The force of Mr. Hawthorne's tale lies in the analysis of the motives which must or might have impelled the husband to such folly, in the first instance, with the possible causes of his perseverance. Upon this thesis a sketch of singular power has been constructed. "The Wedding Knell" is full of the boldest imagination—an imagination fully controlled by taste. The most captious critic could find no flaw in this production. "The Minister's Black Veil" is a masterly composition of which the sole defect is that to the rabble its exquisite skill will be *caviare*. The *obvious* meaning of this article will be found to smother its insinuated one. The *moral* put into the mouth of the dying minister will be supposed to convey the *true* import of the narrative; and that a crime of dark dye (having reference to the "young lady") has been committed, is a point which only minds congenial with that of the author will perceive. "Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe" is

vividly original and managed most dexterously. "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" is exceedingly well imagined, and executed with surpassing ability. The artist breathes in every line of it. "The White Old Maid" is objectionable, even more than "The Minister's Black Veil," on the score of its mysticism. Even with the thoughtful and analytic, there will be much trouble in penetrating its entire import.

"The Hollow of the Three Hills" we would quote in full, had we space,—not as evincing higher talent than any of the other pieces, but as affording an excellent example of the author's peculiar ability. The subject is commonplace. A witch subjects the distant and the past to the view of a mourner. It has been the fashion to describe, in such cases, a mirror in which the images of the absent appear; or a cloud of smoke is made to arise, and thence the figures are gradually unfolded. Mr. Hawthorne has wonderfully heightened his effect by making the ear, in place of the eye, the medium by which the fantasy is conveyed. The head of the mourner is enveloped in the cloak of the witch, and within its magic folds there arise sounds which have an all-sufficient intelligence. Throughout this article, also, the artist is conspicuous—not more in positive than in negative merits. Not only is all done that should be done, but (what perhaps is an end with more difficulty attained) there is nothing done which should not be. Every word *tells*, and there is not a word which does *not* tell.

In "Howe's Masquerade" we observe something which resembles a plagiarism—but which *may be* a very flattering coincidence of thought. We quote the passage in question:

With a dark flush of wrath upon his brow they saw the general *draw his sword* and *advance to meet* the figure *in the cloak* before the latter had stepped one pace upon the floor. "*Villain, unmuffle yourself*," cried he, "you pass no farther!" The figure, without blenching a hair's breadth from the sword which was pointed at his breast, made a solemn pause, and *lowered the cape of the cloak* from his face, yet not sufficiently for the spectators to catch a glimpse of it. But Sir William Howe had evidently seen enough. The sternness of his countenance gave place to a look of wild amazement, if not horror, while he recoiled several steps from the figure, *and let fall his sword* upon the floor.—See vol. 2, p. 20.

The idea here is, that the figure in the cloak is the phantom or reduplication of Sir William Howe; but in an article called "William Wilson," one of the "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque," we have not only the same idea, but the same idea similarly presented in several respects. We quote two paragraphs, which our readers may compare with what has been already given. We have italicized, above, the immediate particulars of resemblance.

The brief moment in which I averted my eyes had been sufficient to produce, apparently, a material change in the arrangement at the upper or farther end of the room. A large

mirror, it appeared to me, now stood where none had been perceptible before ; and as I stepped up to it in extremity of terror, mine own image, but with features all pale and dabbled in blood, *advanced* with a feeble and tottering gait to meet me. Thus it appeared, I say, but was not. It was Wilson who then stood before me in the agonies of dissolution. Not a line in all the marked and singular lineaments of that face which was not even identically mine own. *His mask and cloak lay where he had thrown them, upon the floor.*—Vol. 2, p. 57.

Here, it will be observed that, not only are the two general conceptions identical, but there are various *points* of similarity. In each case the figure seen is the wraith or duplication of the beholder. In each case the scene is a masquerade. In each case the figure is cloaked. In each, there is a quarrel—that is to say, angry words pass between the parties. In each the beholder is enraged. In each the cloak and sword fall upon the floor. The "villain, unmuffle yourself" of Mr. H. is precisely paralleled by a passage at page 56, of "William Wilson."

I must hasten to conclude this paper with a summary of Mr. Hawthorne's merits and demerits.

He is peculiar and *not* original—unless in those detailed fancies and detached thoughts which his want of general originality will deprive of the appreciation due to them, in preventing them from ever reaching the *public* eye. He is infinitely too fond of allegory, and can never hope for popularity so long as he persists in it. This he will not do, for allegory is at war with the whole tone of his

nature, which disports itself never so well as when escaping from the mysticism of his Goodman Browns and White Old Maids into the hearty, genial, but still Indian-summer sunshine of his Wakefields and Little Annie's Rambles. Indeed, *his* spirit of "metaphor run-mad" is clearly imbibed from the phalanx and phalanstery atmosphere in which he has been so long struggling for breath. He has not half the material for the exclusiveness of authorship that he possesses for its universality. He has the purest style, the finest taste, the most available scholarship, the most delicate humor, the most touching pathos, the most radiant imagination, the most consummate ingenuity; and with these varied good qualities he has done *well* as a mystic. But is there any one of these qualities which should prevent his doing doubly as well in a career of honest, upright, sensible, prehensible, and comprehensible things? Let him mend his pen, get a bottle of visible ink, come out from the Old Manse, cut Mr. Alcott, hang (if possible) the editor of *The Dial*, and throw out of the window to the pigs all his odd numbers of *The North American Review*.

ELIZABETH FRIEZE ELLETT.

Mrs. ELLETT, or ELLET, has been long before the public as an author. Having contributed largely to the newspapers and other periodicals in her youth, she first made her *debût* on a more comprehensive scale, as the writer of "Teresa Contarini," a five-act tragedy, which

had considerable merit, but was withdrawn after its first night of representation at the Park. This occurred at some period previous to the year 1834; the precise date I am unable to remember. The ill success of the play had little effect in repressing the ardor of the poetess, who has since furnished numerous papers to the magazines. Her articles are, for the most part, in the *rifacimento* way, and, although no doubt composed in good faith, have the disadvantage of *looking* as if hashed up for just so much money as they will bring. The charge of wholesale plagiarism which has been adduced against Mrs. Ellett, I confess that I have not felt sufficient interest in her works to investigate—and am therefore bound to believe it unfounded. In person, short and much inclined to *embonpoint*.

AMELIA WELBY.

Mrs. AMELIA WELBY has nearly all the imagination of Maria del Occidente, with a more refined taste; and nearly all the passion of Mrs. Norton, with a nicer ear, and (what is surprising) equal art. Very few American poets are at all comparable with her in the true poetic qualities. As for our *poetesses* (an absurd but necessary word), few of them approach her.

With some modifications, this little poem would do honor to any one living or dead:

The moon within our casement beams,
Our blue-eyed babe hath dropped to sleep,

And I have left it to its dreams
  Amid the shadows deep,
To muse beside the silver tide
Whose waves are rippling at thy side.

It is a still and lovely spot
  Where they have laid thee down to rest
The white rose and forget-me-not
  Bloom sweetly on thy breast,
And birds and streams with liquid lull
Have made the stillness beautiful.

And softly thro' the forest bars
  Light lovely shapes, on glossy plumes,
Float ever in, like wingéd stars,
  Amid the purpling glooms ;
Their sweet songs, borne from tree to tree
Thrill the light leaves with melody.

Alas ! the very path I trace,
  In happier hours thy footsteps made ;
This spot was once thy resting-place ;
  Within the silent shade
Thy white hand trained the fragrant bough
That drops its blossoms o'er me now.

'T was here at eve we used to rove ;
  'T was here I breathed my whispered vows,
And sealed them on thy lips, my love,
  Beneath the apple-boughs.
Our hearts had melted into one,
But Death undid what Love had done.

Alas ! too deep a weight of thought
  Had fill'd thy heart in youth's sweet hour,—
It seemed with love and bliss o'erfraught ;
  As fleeting passion-flower
Unfolding 'neath a southern sky,
  To blossom soon and soon to die.

Yet in these calm and blooming bowers,
  I seem to see thee still,

Thy breath seems floating o'er the flowers,
  Thy whisper on the hill;
The clear faint star-light and the sea
Are whispering to my heart of thee.

No more thy smiles my heart rejoice—
  Yet still I start to meet thine eye,
And call upon the low sweet voice
  That gives me no reply—
And list within my silent door
For the light feet that come no more.

In a critical mood I would speak of these stanzas thus: —The subject has *nothing* of originality: a widower muses by the grave of his wife. Here then is a great demerit; for originality of theme, if not absolutely first sought, should be sought among the first. Nothing is more clear than this proposition—although denied by the chlorine critics (the grass-green). The desire of the new is an element of the soul. The most exquisite pleasures grow dull in repetition. A strain of music enchants. Heard a second time it pleases. Heard a tenth, it does not displease. We hear it a twentieth, and ask ourselves why we admired. At the fiftieth it induces ennui—at the hundredth, disgust.

Mrs. Welby's theme is, therefore, radically faulty so far as originality is concerned;—but of common themes, it is one of the very best among the class *passionate*. True passion is prosaic—homely. Any strong mental emotion stimulates *all* the mental faculties; thus grief the imagination,—but in proportion as the effect is strengthened, the cause surceases. The excited fancy triumphs—the

grief is subdued—chastened—is no longer grief. In this mood we are poetic, and it is clear that a poem now written will be poetic in the exact ratio of its dispassion. A passionate poem is a contradiction in terms. When I say, then, that Mrs. Welby's stanzas are good among the class *passionate* (using the term commonly and falsely applied), I mean that her tone is properly subdued, and is not so much the tone of passion as of a gentle and melancholy regret, interwoven with a pleasant sense of the natural loveliness surrounding the lost in the tomb, and a memory of her human beauty while alive. Elegiac poems should either assume this character, or dwell purely on the beauty (moral or physical) of the departed—or, better still, utter the notes of triumph. I have endeavored to carry out this latter idea in some verses which I have called "Lenore."

Those who object to the proposition—that poetry and passion are discordant—would cite Mrs. Welby's poem as an instance of a passionate one. It is precisely similar to the hundred others which have been cited for like purpose. But it is *not* passionate; and for this reason (with others having regard to her fine genius) it *is* poetical. The critics upon this topic display an amusing *ignoratio elenchi*.

Dismissing originality and tone, I pass to the general handling, than which nothing could be more pure, more natural, or more judicious. The perfect keeping of the various points is admirable—and the result is entire unity

of impression, or effect. The time, a moonlight night; the locality of the grave; the passing thither from the cottage, and the conclusion of the theme with the return to "the silent door"; the babe left, meanwhile, "to its dreams"; the "white rose and forget-me-not" upon the breast of the entombed; the "birds and streams, with liquid lull, that make the stillness beautiful"; the birds whose songs "thrill the light leaves with melody";—all these are appropriate and lovely conceptions, only quite unoriginal;—and (be it observed) the higher order of genius should, and will, combine the original with that which is *natural*—not in the vulgar sense (ordinary), but in the artistic sense, which has reference to the *general intention of Nature.* We have this combination well effected in the lines:

> And softly through the forest bars
> Light lovely shapes, on glossy plumes,
> Float ever in, like wingéd stars,
> Amid the purpling glooms—

which are, unquestionably, the finest in the poem.

The reflections suggested by the scene—commencing:

> Alas! the very path I trace,

are, also, something more than merely natural, and are richly ideal; especially the cause assigned for the early death, and "the fragrant bough"

> That drops its blossoms o'er me now.

The two concluding stanzas are remarkable examples

of common fancies rejuvenated, and etherealized by grace of expression and melody of rhythm.

The "light lovely shapes" in the third stanza (however beautiful in themselves) are defective, when viewed in reference to the "birds" of the stanza preceding. The topic "birds" is dismissed in the one paragraph, to be resumed in the other.

"Drops," in the last line of the fourth stanza, is improperly used in an active sense. *To drop* is a neuter verb. An apple drops; we let the apple fall.

The repetition ("seemed," "seem," "seems") in the sixth and seventh stanzas is ungraceful; so also that of "heart," in the last line of the seventh and the first of the eighth. The words "breathed" and "whispered," in the second line of the fifth stanza, have a force too nearly identical. "*'Neath*," just below, is an awkward contraction. *All* contractions are awkward. It is no paradox, that the more prosaic the construction of verse, the better. *Inversions* should be dismissed. The most forcible lines are the most direct. Mrs. Welby owes three fourths of her power (so far as style is concerned) to her freedom from these vulgar and particularly English errors —elision and inversion. *O'er* is, however, too often used by her in place of *over*, and *'t was* for *it was*. We see instances here. The only inversions, strictly speaking, are

The moon within our casement beams,

and—

Amid the shadows deep.

The versification throughout, is unusually good. Nothing can excel,

> And birds and streams with liquid lull
> Have made the stillness beautiful. * * *
>
> And sealed them on thy lips, my love,
> Beneath the apple boughs. * * *

or the whole of the concluding stanza, if we leave out of view the unpleasant repetition of "*And*" at the commencement of the third and fifth lines. "*Thy white hand trained*" (see stanza the fourth) involves four consonants, that unite with difficulty—*ndtr*,—and the harshness is rendered more apparent by the employment of the spondee, "*hand trained*," in place of an iambus. "*Melody*" is a feeble termination of the third stanza's last line. The syllable *dy* is not full enough to sustain the rhyme. All these endings, liber*ty*, proper*ty*, happi*ly*, and the like, however justified by authority, are grossly objectionable. Upon the whole, there are some poets in America (Bryant and Sprague, for example) who equal Mrs. Welby in the negative merits of that limited versification which they chiefly affect—the iambic pentameter—but none equal her in the richer and positive merits of rhythmical variety, conception—invention. They, in the old routine, rarely err. She often surprises, and always delights, by novel, rich, and accurate combination of the ancient musical expressions.

BAYARD TAYLOR.

I blush to see, in the *Literary World*, an invidious notice of Bayard Taylor's "Rhymes of Travel." What makes the matter *worse*, the *critique* is from the pen of one who, although undeservedly, holds, himself, some position as a poet; and what makes the matter *worst*, the attack is anonymous, and (while ostensibly commending) most zealously endeavors to damn the young writer "with faint praise." In his whole life, the author of the criticism never published a poem, long or short, which could compare, either in the higher merits or in the minor morals of the Muse, with *the worst* of Mr. Taylor's compositions.

Observe the generalizing, disingenuous, patronizing tone:

> It is the empty charlatan, to whom all things are alike impossible, who attempts every thing. He can do one thing as well as another; for he can really do nothing. * * * Mr. Taylor's volume, as we have intimated, is an advance upon his previous publication. We could have wished, indeed, something more of restraint in the rhetoric, *but*, etc., etc., etc.

The concluding sentence, here, is an excellent example of one of the most ingeniously malignant of critical *ruses* —that of condemning an author, in especial, for what the world, in general, *feel* to be his principal merit. In fact, the "rhetoric" of Mr. Taylor, in the sense intended by the critic, is Mr. Taylor's *distinguishing excellence*. He is,

unquestionably, the most terse, glowing, and vigorous of all our poets, young or old—in point, I mean, of *expression.* His sonorous, well-balanced rhythm puts me often in mind of Campbell (in spite of our anonymous friend's *implied* sneer at "mere jingling of rhymes, brilliant and successful for the moment"), and his rhetoric in general is of the highest order:—By "rhetoric" I intend the *mode generally* in which thought is presented. Where shall we find more magnificent passages than these?

First queenly Asia, from the fallen thrones
  Of twice three thousand years,
Came *with the woe a grieving Goddess owns*
  Who longs for mortal tears;
The dust of ruin to her mantle clung
  And dimmed her crown of gold,
While *the majestic sorrows of her tongue*
  From Tyre to Indus rolled.

Mourn with me, sisters, in my realm of woe
  Whose only glory streams
From its lost childhood like the Arctic glow
  Which sunless winter dreams.
In the red desert moulders Babylon
  And the wild serpent's hiss
Echoes in Petra's palaces of stone
  And waste Persepolis.

Then from her seat, *amid the palms embowered*
  That shade the Lion-land,
Swart Africa in dusky aspect towered,
  The fetters on her hand,
Backward she saw, from out the drear eclipse,
  The mighty Theban years,
And the deep anguish of her mournful lips
  Interpreted her tears.

I copy these passages first, because the critic in ques-

tion has copied them, without the slightest appreciation of their grandeur—for they *are* grand; and secondly, to put the question of "rhetoric" at rest. No artist who reads them will deny that they are the perfection of *skill* in their way. But thirdly, I wish to call attention to the glowing *imagination* evinced in the lines italicized. My very soul revolts at *such* efforts (as the one I refer to) to depreciate *such* poems as Mr. Taylor's. *Is* there *no* honor —no chivalry left in the land? Are our most deserving writers to be *forever* sneered down, or hooted down, or damned down with faint praise, by a set of men who possess little other ability than that which assures temporary success to *them*, in common with Swaim's panacea or Morrison's pills? The fact is, some person should write, at once, a magazine paper exposing—*ruthlessly* exposing, the *dessous de cartes* of our literary affairs. He should show how and why it is that the ubiquitous quack in letters can always "succeed," while *genius* (which implies self-respect, with a scorn of creeping and crawling) must inevitably succumb. He should point out the "easy arts" by which any one, base enough to do it, can get himself placed at the very head of American letters by an article in that magnanimous journal, *The —— Review*. He should explain, too, how readily the same work can be induced (as in the case of Simms), to vilify, and vilify *personally*, any one not a Northerner, for a trifling "consideration." In fact, our criticism needs a thorough regeneration, *and must have it*.

HENRY B. HIRST.

Mr. HENRY B. HIRST, of Philadelphia, has, undoubtedly, some merit as a poet. His sense of beauty is keen although indiscriminate; and his versification would be unusually effective but for the spirit of hyperism, or exaggeration, which seems to be the ruling feature of the man. He is always sure to overdo a good thing; and, in especial, he insists upon rhythmical effects until they cease to have any effect at all—or until they give to his compositions an air of mere oddity. His principal *defect*, however, is a want of constructive ability—he can never put together a story intelligibly. His chief *sin* is imitativeness. He never writes any thing which does not immediately put us in mind of something that we have seen better written before. Not to do him injustice, however, I here quote two stanzas from a little poem of his called "The Owl." The passages italicized are highly imaginative:

When twilight fades and evening falls
  Alike on tree and tower,
And Silence, like a pensive maid,
  Walks round each slumbering bower;
When fragrant flowerets fold their leaves,
  And all is still in sleep,
The horned owl *on moonlit wing*
  Flies from the donjon keep.

And he calls aloud—"Too-whit! too-whoo!"
  And the nightingale is still,
And the pattering step of the hurrying hare
  Is hushed upon the hill;
And he crouches low in the dewy grass
  As the *lord of the night* goes by,

Not with a loudly whirring wing
But like a lady's sigh.

No one, save a poet at heart, could have conceived these images; and they are embodied with much skill. In the "pattering step," etc., we have an admirable "echo of sound to sense," and the title, "lord of the night," applied to the owl, does Mr. Hirst infinite credit—*if* the idea be original with Mr. Hirst. Upon the whole, the poems of this author are eloquent (or perhaps elocutionary) rather than poetic—but he *has* poetical merit, beyond a doubt—merit which his enemies need not attempt to smother by any mere ridicule thrown upon the *man*.

To my face, and in the presence of my friends, M. H. has always made a point of praising my own poetical efforts; and, for this reason, I should forgive him, perhaps, the amiable weakness of abusing them anonymously. In a late number of the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier*, he does me the honor of attributing to my pen a ballad called "Ulalume," which has been going the rounds of the press, sometimes with *my* name to it, sometimes with Mr. Willis', and sometimes with no name at alll. Mr. Hirst insists upon it that *I* wrote it, and it is just possible that he knows more about the matter than I do myself. Speaking of a particular passage, he says:

We have spoken of the mystical appearance of Astarte as a fine touch of art. This is borrowed, and from the first canto of Hirst's "Endymion"—[The reader will observe that the anonymous critic has *no* personal acquaintance whatever with

Mr. Hirst, but takes care to call him "Hirst" simply, just as we say "Homer."]—from Hirst's "Endymion," published years since in *The Southern Literary Messenger.*

> Slowly Endymion bent, the light Elysian
> Flooding his figure. Kneeling on one knee,
> He loosed his sandals, lea
> And lake and woodland glittering on his vision—
> A fairy landscape, bright and beautiful,
> With Venus at her full.

Astarte is another name for Venus; and when we remember that Diana is about to descend to Endymion—that the scene which is about to follow is one of love—that Venus is the star of love—and that Hirst, by introducing it as he does, shadows out his story exactly as Mr. Poe introduces his Astarte—the plagiarism of idea becomes evident.

Now I really feel ashamed to say that, as yet, I have not perused "Endymion"—for Mr. Hirst will retort at once: "That is no fault of mine—you *should* have read it—I gave you a copy—and, besides, you had no business to fall asleep when I did you the honor of reading it *to* you." Without a word of excuse, therefore, I will merely copy the passage in "Ulalume" which the author of "Endymion" says I purloined from the lines quoted above:

> And now, as the night was senescent
> And star-dials pointed to morn—
> As the star-dials hinted of morn—
> At the end of my path a liquescent
> And nebulous lustre was born,
> Out of which a miraculous crescent
> Arose with a duplicate horn—

> Astarte's bediamonded crescent,
> Distinct with its duplicate horn.

Now, I may be permitted to regret—really to *regret*—that I can find no resemblance between the two passages in question; for *malo cum Platone errare*, etc., and to be a good imitator of Henry B. Hirst is quite honor enough for *me*.

In the meantime, here is a passage from another little ballad of mine, called "Lenore," first published in 1830:

> How shall the ritual, then, be read—the requiem how be sung
> By you—by yours, the evil eye—by yours, the slanderous tongue
> That did to death the innocence that died, and died so young?

And here is a passage from "The Penance of Roland," by Henry B. Hirst, published in *Graham's Magazine* for January, 1848:

> *Mine the tongue that wrought this evil—mine the false and slanderous tongue*
> *That done to death* the Lady Gwineth—Oh, my soul is sadly wrong!
> "Demon! devil," groaned the warrior, "devil of *the evil eye!*"

Now my objection to all this is not that Mr. Hirst has *appropriated* my property—(I am fond of a *nice* phrase)—but that he has not done it so cleverly as I could wish. Many a lecture, on literary topics, have I given Mr. H.; and I confess that, in general, he has adopted my advice so implicitly that his poems, upon the whole, are little more than our conversations done into verse.

"Steal, dear Endymion," I used to say to him, "for very well do I know you can't help it; and the more you put in your book that is not your own, why the better

your book will be:—but be cautious and steal *with an air*. In regard to myself—you need give yourself no trouble about *me*. I shall always feel honored in being of use to you; and provided you purloin my poetry *in a reputable manner*, you are quite welcome to just as much of it as you (who are a *very* weak little man) can conveniently carry away."

So far—let me confess—Mr. Hirst has behaved remarkably well in largely availing himself of the privilege thus accorded:—but, in the case now at issue, he stands in need of some gentle rebuke. I do *not* object to his stealing my verses; but I *do* object to his stealing them in bad grammar. My quarrel with him is *not*, in short, that he *did* this thing, but that he *has went and done did it*.

ROBERT WALSH.

Having read Mr. WALSH'S "Didactics" with much attention and pleasure, I am prepared to admit that he is one of the finest writers, one of the most accomplished scholars, and when not in too great a hurry, one of the most accurate thinkers in the country. Yet had I never seen this work I should never have entertained these opinions. Mr. Walsh has been peculiarly an anonymous writer, and has thus been instrumental in cheating himself of a great portion of that literary renown which is most unequivocally his due. I have been not unfrequently astonished in the perusal of this book at meeting

with a variety of well-known and highly esteemed acquaintances, for whose paternity I had been accustomed to give credit where I now find it should not have been given. Among these I may mention in especial the very excellent essay on the acting of Kean, entitled "Notices of Kean's Principal Performances during his First Season in Philadelphia," to be found at page 146, volume I. I have often thought of the unknown author of this essay, as of one to whom I might speak, if occasion should at any time be granted me, with a perfect certainty of being understood. I have looked to the article itself as to a fair oasis in the general blankness and futility of our customary theatrical notices. I read it with that thrill of pleasure with which I always welcome my own long-cherished opinions, when I meet them unexpectedly in the language of another. How absolute is the necessity now daily growing, of rescuing our stage criticism from the control of illiterate mountebanks, and placing it in the hands of gentlemen and scholars!

The paper on "Collegiate Education," is much more than a sufficient reply to that essay in the *Old Bachelor* of Mr. Wirt, in which the attempt is made to argue down colleges as seminaries for the young. Mr. Walsh's article does not uphold Mr. Barlow's plan of a national university—a plan which is assailed by the Attorney-General,—but comments upon some errors in point of fact, and enters into a brief but comprehensive examination of the general subject. He maintains with undeniable truth,

that it is illogical to deduce arguments against universities which are to exist at the present day, from the inconveniences found to be connected with institutions formed in the dark ages—institutions similar to our own in but few respects, modelled upon the principles and prejudices of the times, organized with a view to particular ecclesiastical purposes, and confined in their operations by an infinity of Gothic and perplexing regulations. He thinks (and I believe he thinks with a great majority of our well-educated fellow-citizens) that in the case either of a great national institute or of State universities, nearly all the difficulties so much insisted upon will prove a series of mere chimeras—that the evils apprehended might be readily obviated, and the acknowledged benefits uninterruptedly secured. He denies, very justly, the assertion of the *Old Bachelor*—that, in the progress of society, funds for collegiate establishments will no doubt be accumulated, independently of government, when their benefits are evident, and a necessity for them felt—and that the rich who have funds will, whenever strongly impressed with the necessity of so doing, provide, either by associations or otherwise, proper seminaries for the education of their children. He shows that these assertions are contradictory to experience, and more particularly to the experience of the State of Virginia, where, notwithstanding the extent of private opulence, and the disadvantages under which the community so long labored from a want of regular and systematic instruction, it was the government

which was finally compelled, and not private societies which were induced, to provide establishments for effecting the great end. He says (and therein we must all fully agree with him) that Virginia may consider herself fortunate in following the example of all the enlightened nations of modern times rather than in harkening to the counsels of the *Old Bachelor*. He dissents (and who would not?) from the allegation, that "the most eminent men in Europe, particularly in England, have received their education neither at public schools nor universities," and shows that the very reverse may be affirmed—that on the continent of Europe by far the greater number of its great names have been attached to the rolls of its universities—and that in England a vast majority of those minds which we have reverenced so long—the Bacons, the Newtons, the Barrows, the Clarks, the Spencers, the Miltons, the Drydens, the Addisons, the Temples, the Hales, the Clarendons, the Mansfields, Chatham, Pitt, Fox, Wyndham, etc., were educated among the venerable cloisters of Oxford or of Cambridge. He cites the Oxford Prize Essays, so well known even in America, as direct evidence of the energetic ardor in acquiring knowledge brought about through the means of British universities, and maintains that "when attention is given to the subsequent public stations and labors of most of the writers of these essays, it will be found that they prove also the ultimate practical utility of the literary discipline of the colleges for the students and the nation." He argues, that were it

even true that the greatest men have not been educated in public schools, the fact would have little to do with the question of their efficacy in the instruction of the mass of mankind. Great men cannot be *created*—and are usually independent of all particular schemes of education. Public seminaries are best adapted to the generality of cases. He concludes with observing that the course of study pursued at English universities is more liberal by far than we are willing to suppose it—that it is, demonstrably, the best, inasmuch as regards the preference given to classical and mathematical knowledge—and that upon the whole it would be an easy matter, in transferring to America the general principles of those institutions, to leave them their obvious errors, while we avail ourselves as we best may of their still more obvious virtues and advantages.

The only paper in the "Didactics" to which I have any decided objection is a tolerably long article on the subject of *Phrenology*, entitled "Memorial of the Phrenological Society of —— to the Honorable the Congress of —— Sitting at ——." Considered as a specimen of mere burlesque, the *Memorial* is well enough—but I am sorry to see the energies of a scholar and an editor (who should be, if he be not, a man of metaphysical science) so wickedly employed as in any attempt to throw ridicule upon a question (however much maligned, or however apparently ridiculous) whose merits he has never examined, and of whose very nature, history, and assump-

tions, he is most evidently ignorant. Mr. Walsh is either ashamed of this article now, or he will have plentiful reason to be ashamed of it hereafter.

SEBA SMITH.

What few notices we have seen of this poem* speak of it as the production of *Mrs.* Seba Smith. To be sure, gentlemen may be behind the scenes, and know more about the matter than we do. They may have some private reason for understanding that black is white—some reason into which we, personally, are not initiated. But, to ordinary perception, "Powhatan" is the composition of Seba Smith, *Esquire*, of Jack Downing memory, and *not* of his wife. *Seba Smith* is the name upon the title-page; and the personal pronoun which supplies the place of this well-known prænomen and cognomen in the preface is, we are constrained to say, of the masculine gender. "The author of 'Powhatan,'" thus, for example, runs a portion of the prolegomena—"does not presume to claim for *his* production the merit of good and genuine poetry, nor does *he* pretend to assign it a place in the classes or forms into which poetry is divided,"—in all of which, by the way he is decidedly right. But can it be that no gentleman has *read* even so far as the preface of the book? Can it be that the critics have had no curi-

* "Powhatan: a Metrical Romance, in Seven Cantos." By Seba Smith. New York: Harper and Brothers.

osity to creep into the *adyta*—into the inner mysteries of this temple? If so, they are decidedly right too.

"Powhatan" is handsomely bound. Its printing is clear beyond comparison. Its paper is magnificent, and we undertake to say (for *we have* read it through with the greatest attention) that there is not a single typographical error in it, from one end to the other. Further than this, in the way of commendation, no man with both brains and conscience should proceed. In truth a more absurdly *flat* affair—for flat is the only epithet which applies in this case—was never before paraded to the world, with so grotesque an air of bombast and assumption.

To give some idea of the *tout ensemble* of the book—we have first a dedication to the "Young People of the United States," in which Mr. Jack Downing lives, in "the hope that he may do some good in his day and generation, by adding something to the sources of rational enjoyment and *mental culture*." Next we have a preface, occupying four pages, in which, quoting his publishers, the author tells us that poetry is a "very great bore, and won't sell,"—a thing which cannot be denied in certain cases, but which Mr. Downing denies in his own. "It may be true," he says, "of endless masses of words, that are poured forth from the press, under the name of poetry,"—but it is not true "of *genuine* poetry—of that which is worthy of the name"—in short, we presume he means to say it is not in the least little bit true of "Powhatan," with regard to whose merits he wishes to

be tried, not by the critics (we fear, in fact, that here it is the critics who will be tried), but by the *common* taste of *common* readers,"—all which ideas are common enough, to say no more.

We have next, a "Sketch of the Character of Powhatan," which is exceedingly interesting and commendable, and which is taken from Burk's "History of Virginia,"—four pages more. Then comes a *Proem*—four pages more—forty-eight lines—twelve lines to a page—in which all that we can understand is something about the name of "Powhatan"

> Descending to a distant age,
> Embodied forth on the deathless page

of the author—that is to say, of Jack Downing, Esquire. We have now one after the other, CANTOS one, two, three, four, five, six, and seven—each subdivided into PARTS, by means of Roman numerals—some of these PARTS comprehending as many as six lines—upon the principle, we presume, of packing up precious commodities in small bundles. The volume then winds up with *Notes*, in proportion of three to one, as regards the amount of text, and taken, the most of them, from Burk's "Virginia," as before.

It is very difficult to keep one's countenance when reviewing such a *work* as this; but we will do our best, for the truth's sake, and put on as serious a face as the case will admit.

The leading fault of "Powhatan," then, is precisely what

its author supposes to be its principal merit. "It would be difficult," he says, in that pitiable preface, in which he has so exposed himself, "to find a poem that embodies more truly the spirit of history, or indeed that follows out more faithfully many of its details." It would, indeed; and we are very sorry to say it. The truth is, Mr. Downing has never dreamed of any artistic *arrangement* of his facts. He has gone straight forward, like a blind horse, and turned neither to the one side nor to the other, for fear of stumbling. But he gets them all in—every one of them—the facts we mean. Powhatan never did any thing in his life, we are sure, that Mr. Downing has not got in his poem. He begins at the beginning, and goes on steadily to the end—painting away at his story, just like a sign-painter at a sign; beginning at the left-hand side of his board, and plastering through to the right. But he has omitted one very ingenious trick of the sign-painter. He has forgotten to write under his portrait—"*this is a pig*," and thus there is some danger of mistaking it for an opossum.

But we are growing scurrilous, in spite of our promise, and must put on a sober visage once more. It *is* a hard thing, however, when we have to read and write about such doggerel as this:

> But bravely to the river's brink,
> I led my warrior train,
> And face to face, each glance they sent,
> We sent it back again.
> *Their werowance looked stern at me,*
> *And I looked stern at him,*

And all my warriors clasped their bows,
And nerved each heart and limb.
I raised my heavy war-club high,
And swung it fiercely round,
And shook it toward the shallop's side,
Then laid it on the ground.
And then the lighted calumet
I offered to their view,
And thrice I drew the sacred smoke,
And toward the shallop blew,
And as the curling vapor rose,
Soft as a spirit prayer,
I saw the pale-face leader wave
A white flag in the air.
Then launching out their painted skiff
They boldly came to land,
And spoke us many a kindly word,
And took us by the hand ;
Presenting rich and shining gifts,
Of copper, brass, and beads,
To show that they were men like us,
And prone to generous deeds.
We held a long and friendly talk,
Inquiring whence they came,
And who the leader of their band.
And what their country's name.
And how their mighty shallop moved
Across the boundless sea,
And why they touched our great king's land
Without his liber*ty*.

It won't do. We cannot sing to this tune any longer. We greatly prefer

John Gilpin was a gentleman
Of credit and renown,
A train-band captain eke was he
Of famous London town.

Or—

Old Grimes is dead, that good old man,
We ne'er shall see him more,
He used to wear an over-coat
All buttoned down before—

or lines to that effect—we wish we could remember the words. The part, however, about

Their werowance look'd stern at me,
And I looked stern at him—

is not quite *original* with Mr. Downing—is it? We merely ask for information. Have we not heard something about

An old crow sitting on a hickory limb,
Who winked at me, and I winked at him?

The simple truth is, that Mr. Downing never committed a greater mistake in his life than when he fancied himself a poet, even in the ninety-ninth degree. We doubt whether he could distinctly state the difference between an epic and an epigram. And it will not do for him to appeal from the critic to *common* readers—because we assure him his book is a very *un*common book. We never saw any one so uncommonly bad—nor one about whose parturition so uncommon a fuss has been made, so little to the satisfaction of common-sense. Your poem is a curiosity, Mr. Jack Downing; your "Metrical Romance" is not worth a single half sheet of the pasteboard upon which it is printed. This is our humble and honest opinion; and, although honest opinions are not very plentiful just now, you can have ours at what it is worth. But we wish, before parting, to ask you one question.

What *do* you mean by that motto from Sir Philip Sidney, upon the title-page? "He cometh to you with a tale that holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney-corner." What do you mean by it, we say? Either you cannot intend to apply it to the "*tale*" of "Powhatan," or else all the "old men" in your particular neighborhood must be *very* old men; and all the "little children" a set of dunderheaded little ignoramuses.

MARGARET MILLER AND LUCRETIA MARIA DAVIDSON.

The name of LUCRETIA DAVIDSON is familiar to all readers of poetry. Dying at the early age of seventeen, she has been rendered famous not less, and certainly not more, by her own precocious genius than by three memorable biographies—one by President Morse, of the American Society of Arts, another by Miss Sedgwick, and a third by Robert Southey. Mr. Irving had formed an acquaintance with some of her relatives, and thus, while in Europe, took great interest in all that was said or written of his young countrywoman. Upon his return to America, he called upon Mrs. Davidson, and then, in 1833, first saw the subject of the memoir now before us,*—a fairy-like child of eleven. Three years afterward he met with her again, and then found her in delicate health.

* "Biography and Poetical Remains of the late Margaret Miller Davidson." By Washington Irving. Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard.

Three years having again elapsed, the MSS. which form the basis of the present volume were placed in his hands by Mrs. Davidson, as all that remained of her daughter.

Few books have interested us more profoundly. Yet the interest does not appertain solely to Margaret. "In fact the narrative," says Mr. Irving, "will be found almost as illustrative of the character of the mother as of the child; they were singularly identified in taste, feeling, and pursuits; tenderly entwined together by maternal and filial affection, they reflected an inexpressibly touching grace and interest upon each other by this holy relationship, and, to my mind, it would be marring one of the most beautiful and affecting groups in modern literature, to sunder them." In these words the biographer conveys no more than a just idea of the exquisite loveliness of the picture here presented to view.

The MSS. handed Mr. Irving have been suffered, in a great measure, to tell their own thrilling tale. There has been no injudicious attempt at mere authorship. The compiler has confined himself to chronological arrangement of his memoranda, and to such simple and natural comments as serve to bind rather than to illustrate where no illustration was needed. These memoranda consist of relations by Mrs. Davidson of the infantine peculiarities of her daughter, and of her habits and general thoughts in more matured life, intermingled with letters from the young poetess to intimate friends. There is also a letter from the bereaved mother to Miss Sedgwick, detailing the

last moments of the child—a letter so full of all potent nature, so full of minute beauty, and truth, and pathos, that to read it without tears would be to prove one's self less than human.

The "Poetical Remains" of this young creature, who perished (of consumption) in her sixteenth year, occupy about two hundred pages of a somewhat closely printed octavo. The longest poem is called "Lenore," and consists of some two thousand lines, varying in metre from the ordinary octo-syllabic, to the four-footed, or twelve-syllabled iambic. The story, which is a romantic love-tale, not ill-conceived in its incidents, is told with a skill which might put more practised bards to the blush, and with occasional bursts of the truest poetic fire. But although as indicative of her future power it is the most important as it is the longest of her productions, yet, as a whole, it is not equal to some of her shorter compositions. It was written not long before her death, at the age of fifteen, and (as we glean from the biography) after patient reflection, with much care, and with a high resolve to do something for fame. As the work of so mere a child, it is unquestionably wonderful. Its *length*, viewed in connection with its keeping, its unity, its adaptation, and completeness, will impress the metaphysician most forcibly, when surveying the capacities of its author. Powers are here brought into play which are the last to be matured. For fancy we might have looked, and for the lower evidences of skill in a perfect versification and the like, but hardly for what we see in "Lenore."

Yet remarkable as this production is, from the pen of a girl of fifteen, it is by no means so incomprehensible as are some of the shorter pieces. We have known instances—rarely, to be sure—but still we have known instances when finer poems in every respect than "Lenore" have been written by children of as immature age—but we look around us in vain for any thing composed at eight years, which can bear comparison with the lines subjoined.

TO MAMMA.

Farewell, dear mother; for a while
I must resign thy plaintive smile;
May angels watch thy couch of woe,
And joys unceasing round thee flow.

May the Almighty Father spread
His sheltering wings above thy head.
It is not long that we must part,
Then cheer thy downcast, drooping heart.

Remember, oh! remember me,
Unceasing is my love for thee!
When death shall sever earthly ties,
When thy loved form all senseless lies,

Oh! that my form with thine could flee,
And roam through wide eternity;
Could tread with thee the courts of heaven,
And count the brilliant stars of even!

Nor are these stanzas, written at ten, in any degree less remarkable—

MY NATIVE LAKE.

Thy verdant banks, thy lucid stream,
Lit by the sun's resplendent beam,

Reflect each bending tree so light
Upon thy bounding bosom bright.
Could I but see thee once again,
My own, my beautiful Champlain !

The little isles that deck thy breast,
And calmly on thy bosom rest,
How often, in my childish glee,
I 've sported round them, bright and free !
Could I but see thee once again,
My own, my beautiful Champlain !

How oft I 've watch'd the fresh'ning shower
Bending the summer tree and flower,
And felt my little heart beat high
As the bright rainbow graced the sky.
Could I but see thee once again,
My own, my beautiful Champlain !

And shall I never see thee more,
My native lake, my much-loved shore,
And must I bid a long adieu,
My dear, my infant home, to you ?
Shall I not see thee once again,
My own, my beautiful Champlain ?

In the way of criticism upon these extraordinary compositions, Mr. Irving has attempted little, and, in general, he seems more affected by the loveliness and the purity of the child than even by the genius she has evinced—however highly he may have estimated this latter. In respect, however, to a poem entitled "My Sister Lucretia," he thus speaks: "We have said that the example of her sister Lucretia was incessantly before her, and no better proof can be given of it than in the following lines, which breathe the heavenly aspirations of her pure young spirit,

in strains to us quite unearthly. We may have read poetry more artificially perfect in its structure, but never any more truly divine in its inspiration." The nature of inspiration is disputable—and we will not pretend to assert that Mr. Irving is in the wrong. His words, however, in their hyperbole, do wrong to his subject, and would be hyperbole still, if applied to the most exalted poets of all time.

The analogies of nature are universal; and just as the most rapidly growing herbage is the most speedy in its decay,—just as the ephemera struggles to perfection in a day only to perish in that day's decline,—so the mind is early matured only to be early in its decadence; and when we behold in the eye of infancy the soul of the adult, it is but indulging in a day-dream to hope for any further proportionate development. Should the prodigy survive to ripe age, a mental imbecility, not far removed from idiocy itself, is too frequently the result. From this rule the exceptions are rare indeed; but it should be observed that, when the exception does occur, the intellect is of a Titan cast even to the days of its extreme senility, and acquires renown not in one but in all the wide fields of fancy and of reason.

LUCRETIA MARIA DAVIDSON,* the elder of the two sweet sisters who have acquired so much of fame prematurely, had not, like Margaret, an object of poetical emu-

* "Poetical Remains of the late Maria Davidson, Collected and Arranged by her Mother; with a Biography by Miss Sedgwick." Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard.

lation in her own family. In her genius, be it what it may, there is more of self-dependence—less of the imitative. Her mother's generous romance of soul may have stimulated, but did not instruct. Thus, although she has actually given less *evidence* of power (in our opinion) than Margaret,—less written proof,—still its *indication* must be considered at higher value. Both perished at sixteen. Margaret, we think, has left the better poems,—certainly, the more precocious,—while Lucretia evinces more unequivocally the soul of the poet. We have quoted in full some stanzas composed by the former at eight years of age. The latter's earliest effusions are dated at fourteen. Yet the first compositions of the two seem to us of nearly equal merit.

The most elaborate production of Margaret is "Lenore." It was written not long before her death, at the age of fifteen, after patient reflection, with much care, and with all that high resolve to do something for fame with which the reputation of her sister had inspired her. Under such circumstances, and with the early poetical education which she could not have failed to receive, we confess that, granting her a trifle more than average talent, it would have been rather a matter for surprise had she produced a worse than had she produced a better poem than "Lenore." Its *length*, viewed in connection with its keeping, its unity, its adaptation, and its completeness (and all these are points having reference to artistical *knowledge* and perseverance), will impress the critic more favorably

than its fancy, or any other indication of poetic power. In all the more important qualities, we have seen far—very far—finer poems than "Lenore" written at a much earlier age than fifteen.

"Amir Khan," the longest and chief composition of Lucretia, has been long known to the reading public. Partly through Professor Morse, yet no doubt partly through their own merits, the poems found their way to Southey, who, after his peculiar fashion, and not unmindful of his previous *furores* in the case of Kirke White, Chatterton, and others of precocious ability, or at least celebrity, thought proper to *review* them in the Quarterly. This was at a period when we humbled ourselves, with a subserviency which would have been disgusting had it not been ludicrous, before the crudest critical *dicta* of Great Britain. It pleased the laureate, after some squibbing in the way of demurrer, to speak of the book in question as follows: "In these poems there is enough of originality, enough of aspiration, enough of conscious energy, enough of growing power to warrant any expectations, however sanguine, which the patrons, and the friends, and parents of the deceased could have formed." Meaning nothing, or rather meaning any thing, as we choose to interpret it, this sentence was still sufficient (and in fact the half of it would have been more than sufficient) to establish upon an immovable basis the reputation of Miss Davidson in America. Thenceforward any examination of her true claims to distinction was considered little less than

a declaration of heresy. Nor does the awe of the laureate's *ipse dixit* seem even yet to have entirely subsided. "The genius of Lucretia Davidson," says Miss Sedgwick, "has had the meed of far more authoritative praise than ours; the following tribute is from the *London Quarterly Review*." What this lady—for whom and for whose opinion we still have the highest respect—can mean by calling the praise of Southey "more authoritative" than her own, is a point we shall not pause to determine. *Her* praise is at least honest, or we hope so. Its "authority" is in exact proportion with each one's estimate of her judgment. But it would not do to say all this of the author of "Thalaba." It would not do to say it in the hearing of men who are sane, and who, being sane, have perused the leading articles in the *London Quarterly Review* during the ten or fifteen years prior to that period when Robert Southey, having concocted "The Doctor," took definite leave of his wits. In fact, for any thing that we have yet seen or heard to the contrary, the opinion of the laureate, in respect to the poem of "Amir Khan," is a matter still only known to Robert Southey. But were it known to all the world, as Miss Sedgwick supposes with so charmingly innocent an air; we mean to say were it really an honest opinion,—this "authoritative praise,"—still it would be worth, in the eyes of every sensible person, only just so much as it demonstrates, or makes a show of demonstrating. Happily the day has gone by, and we trust forever, when men are content to

swear blindly by the words of a master, poet-laureate though he be. But what Southey says of the poem is at best an opinion and no more. What Miss Sedgwick says of it is very much in the same predicament. "Amir Khan," she writes, "has long been before the public, but we think it has suffered from a general and very natural distrust of precocious genius. The versification is graceful, the story beautifully developed, and the orientalism well sustained. *We think it would not have done discredit to our most popular poets in the meridian of their fame; as the production of a girl of fifteen it seems prodigious.*" The cant of a kind heart when betraying into error a naturally sound judgment, is perhaps the only species of cant in the world not altogether contemptible.

We yield to no one in warmth of admiration for the personal character of these sweet sisters, as that character is depicted by the mother, by Miss Sedgwick, and Mr. Irving. But it costs us no effort to distinguish that which, in our heart, is love of their worth, from that which, in our intellect, is appreciation of their poetic ability. With the former, as critic, we have nothing to do. The distinction is one too obvious for comment; and its observation would have spared us much twaddle on the part of the commentators upon "Amir Khan."

We will endeavor to convey, as concisely as possible, some idea of this poem as it exists, not in the fancy of the enthusiastic, but in fact. It includes four hundred and forty lines. The metre is chiefly octo-syllabic. At

one point it is varied by a casual introduction of an anapæst in the first and second foot; at another (in a song) by seven stanzas of four lines each, rhyming alternately; the metre anapæstic of four feet alternating with three. The versification is always good, so far as the meagre written rules of our English prosody extend; that is to say, there is seldom a syllable too much or too little; but long and short syllables are placed at random, and a crowd of consonants sometimes renders a line unpronounceable. For example:

> He loved,—and oh, he loved so well
> *That sorrow scarce dared break the spell.*

At times, again, the rhythm lapses, in the most inartistical manner, and evidently without design, from one species to another altogether incongruous; as, for example, in the sixth line of these eight, where the tripping anapæstic stumbles into the demure iambic, recovering itself, even more awkwardly, in the conclusion:

> Bright Star of the Morning! this bosom is cold—
> I was forced from my native shade,
> And I wrapped me around with my mantle's fold,
> A sad, mournful Circassian maid!
> And I then vow'd that rapture should never move
> *This changeless cheek, this rayless eye,*
> And I then vowed to feel neither bliss nor love,
> *But I vowed I would meet thee and die.*

Occasionally the versification rises into melody and even strength; as here—

> 'T was at the hour when Peris love
> To gaze upon the Heaven above

Whose portals bright with many a gem
Are closed—forever closed *on them*.

Upon the whole, however, it is feeble, vacillating, and ineffective; giving token of having been "touched up" by the hand of a friend from a much worse into its present condition. Such rhymes as floor and shower—ceased and breast—shade and spread—brow and woe—clear and far—clear and air—morning and dawning—forth and earth—step and deep—Khan and hand—are constantly occurring; and although, certainly, we should not, *as a general rule*, expect better things from a girl of sixteen, we still look in vain, and with something very much akin to a smile, for aught even approaching that "*marvellous ease and grace of versification*" about which Miss Sedgwick, in the benevolence of her heart, discourses.

Nor does the story, to our dispassionate apprehension, appear "beautifully developed." It runs thus:—Amir Khan, Subahdar of Cachemere, weds a Circassian slave who, cold as a statue and as obstinately silent, refuses to return his love. The Subahdar applies to a magician, who gives him

a pensive flower
Gathered at midnight's magic hour;

the effect of whose perfume renders him apparently lifeless while still in possession of all his senses. Amreeta, the slave, supposing her lover dead, gives way to clamorous grief, and reveals the secret love which she has long

borne her lord, but refused to divulge because a slave. Amir Khan hereupon revives, and all trouble is at an end.

Of course, no one at all read in Eastern fable will be willing to give Miss Davidson credit for *originality* in the conception of this little story; and if she have claim to merit at all, as regards it, that claim must be founded upon the manner of narration. But it will be at once evident that the most naked outline alone can be given in the compass of four hundred and forty lines. The tale is, in sober fact, told very much as any young person might be expected to tell it. The strength of the narrator is wholly laid out upon a description of moonlight (in the usual style) with which the poem commences; upon a second description of moonlight (in precisely the same manner) with which a second division commences; and in a third description of the hall in which the entranced Subahdar reposes. This is all—absolutely all; or at least the rest has the nakedness of mere catalogue. We recognize, throughout, the poetic sentiment, but little—very little—of poetic *power*. We see occasional gleams of imagination: for example—

> And every crystal cloud of heaven
> Bowed as it passed the queen of even. * * *
>
> Amreeta was cold as the marble floor
> That glistens beneath the nightly shower. * * *
>
> At that calm hour when Peris love
> To gaze upon the heaven above,
> Whose portals bright with many a gem
> Are closed—forever closed *on them*. * * *

The Subahdar with noiseless step
Rushed like the night-breeze o'er the deep.

We look in vain for another instance worth quoting. But were the fancy seen in these examples observable either in the general conduct or in the incidents of the narrative, we should not feel obliged to disagree so unequivocally with that opinion which pronounces this clever little production "*one which would not have done discredit to our most popular poets in the meridian of their fame!*"

"As the work of a girl of sixteen," most assuredly we *do not* think it "*prodigious.*" In regard to it we may repeat what we said of "Lenore,"—that we have seen finer poems in every respect, written by children of more immature age. It is a creditable composition; nothing beyond this. And, in so saying, we shall startle none but the brainless, and the adopters of ready-made ideas. We are convinced that we express the unuttered sentiment of every educated individual who has read the poem. Nor, having given the plain facts of the case, do we feel called upon to proffer any apology for our flat refusal to play ditto either to Miss Sedgwick, to Mr. Irving, or to Mr. Southey.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.

In speaking of Mr. WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING, who has just published a very neat little volume of poems, we feel the necessity of employing the indefinite rather than the definite article. He is *a*, and by no means *the*, Wil-

liam Ellery Channing. He is only *the son* of the great essayist deceased. He is just such a person, in despite of his *clarum et venerabile nomen*, as Pindar would have designated by the significant term τις. It may be said in his favor that nobody ever heard of him. Like an honest woman, he has always succeeded in keeping himself from being made the subject of gossip. His book contains about sixty-three things, which he calls poems, and which he no doubt seriously supposes so to be. They are full of all kinds of mistakes, of which the most important is that of their having been printed at all. They are not precisely English—nor will we insult a great nation by calling them Kickapoo; perhaps they are Channingese. We may convey some general idea of them by two foreign terms not in common use—the Italian *pavoneggiarsi*, "to strut like a peacock," and the German word for "sky-rocketing," *schwarmerei*. They are more preposterous, in a word, than any poems except those of the author of "Sam Patch"; for we presume we are right (are we not?) in taking it for granted that the author of "Sam Patch" is the very worst of all the wretched poets that ever existed upon earth.

In spite, however, of the customary phrase about a man's "making a fool of himself," we doubt if any one was ever a fool of his own free will and accord. A poet, therefore, should not always be taken too strictly to task. He should be treated with leniency, and, even when damned, should be damned with respect. Nobility of descent, too, should be allowed its privileges not more in social life

than in letters. The son of a great author cannot be handled too tenderly by the critical Jack Ketch. Mr. Channing must be hung, that 's true. He must be hung *in terrorem*—and for this there is no help under the sun; but then we shall do him all manner of justice, and observe every species of decorum, and be especially careful of his feelings, and hang him gingerly and gracefully, with a silken cord, as the Spaniards hang their grandees of the blue blood, their nobles of the *sangre azula*.

To be serious, then—as we always wish to be if possible, —Mr. Channing (whom we suppose to be a *very* young man, since we are precluded from supposing him a *very* old one) appears to have been inoculated, at the same moment, with *virus* from Tennyson and from Carlyle. And here we do not wish to be misunderstood. For Tennyson, as for a man imbued with the richest and rarest poetic impulses, we have an admiration—a reverence unbounded, His "Morte D'Arthur," his "Locksley Hall," his "Sleeping Beauty," his "Lady of Shalott," his "Lotos Eaters," his "Ænone," and many other poems, are not surpassed, in all that gives to poetry its distinctive value, by the compositions of any one living or dead. And his leading error—that error which renders him unpopular—a point, to be sure, of no particular importance—that very error, we say, is founded in truth—in a keen perception of the elements of poetic beauty. We allude to his quaintness—to what the world chooses to term his affectation. No true poet—no critic whose approbation is worth even

a copy of the volume we now hold in our hand—will deny that he feels impressed, sometimes even to tears, by many of those very affectations which he is impelled by the prejudice of his education, or by the cant of his reason, to condemn. He should thus be led to examine the extent of the one, and to be wary of the deductions of the other. In fact, the profound intuition of Lord Bacon has supplied, in one of his immortal apothegms, the whole philosophy of the point at issue. "There is no exquisite beauty," he truly says, "without some *strangeness* in its proportions." We maintain, then, that Tennyson errs, not in his occasional quaintness, but in its continual and obtrusive excess. And, in accusing Mr. Channing of having been inoculated with *virus* from Tennyson, we merely mean to say that he has adopted and exaggerated that noble poet's characteristic defect, having mistaken it for his principal merit.

Mr. Tennyson is quaint only; he is never, as some have supposed him, obscure—except, indeed, to the uneducated, whom he does not address. Mr. Carlyle, on the other hand, is obscure only; he is seldom, as some have imagined him, quaint. So far he is right; for although quaintness, employed by a man of judgment and genius, may be made auxiliary to a *poem*, whose true thesis is beauty, and beauty alone, it is grossly, and even ridiculously, out of place in a work of prose. But in his obscurity it is scarcely necessary to say that he is wrong. Either a man intends to be understood, or he does not. If

he write a book which he intends *not* to be understood, we shall be very happy indeed not to understand it; but if he write a book which he means to be understood, and, in this book, be at all possible pains to prevent us from understanding it, we can only say that he is an ass—and this, to be brief, is our private opinion of Mr. Carlyle, which we now take the liberty of making public.

It seems that having deduced, from Tennyson and Carlyle, an opinion of the sublimity of every thing odd, and of the profundity of every thing meaningless, Mr. Channing has conceived the idea of setting up for himself as a poet of *unusual* depth, and *very* remarkable powers of mind. His airs and graces, in consequence, have a highly picturesque effect, and the Boston critics, who have a notion that poets are porpoises (for they are always talking about their running in "schools"), cannot make up their minds as to what particular school he must belong. *We* say the Bobby Button school, by all means. He clearly belongs to that. And should nobody ever have heard of the Bobby Button school, that is a point of no material importance. We will answer for it, as it is one of our own. Bobby Button is a gentleman with whom, for a long time, we have had the honor of an intimate acquaintance. His personal appearance is striking. He has quite a big head. His eyes protrude and have all the air of saucers. His chin retreats. His mouth is depressed at the corners. He wears a perpetual frown of contemplation. His words are slow, emphatic, few, and oracular.

His "*thes*," "*ands*," and "*buts*," have more meaning than other men's polysyllables. His nods would have put Burleigh's to the blush. His whole aspect, indeed, conveys the idea of a gentleman modest to a fault, and painfully overburthened with intellect. We insist, however, upon calling Mr. Channing's school of poetry the Bobby Button school, rather because Mr. Channing's poetry is strongly suggestive of Bobby Button, than because Mr. Button himself ever dallied, to any very great extent, with the Muses. With the exception, indeed, of a *very* fine "Sonnet to a Pig"—or rather the fragment of a sonnet, for he proceeded no farther than the words "*O* piggy wiggy," with the *O* italicized for emphasis,—with the exception of this, we say, we are not aware of his having produced any thing worthy of that stupendous genius which is certainly *in* him, and only wants, like the starling of Sterne, "to get out."

The best passage in the book before us is to be found at page 121, and we quote it, as a matter of simple justice, in full:—

> Dear friend, in this fair atmosphere again,
> Far from the noisy echoes of the main,
> Amid the world-old mountains, and the hills
> From whose strange grouping a fine power distills
> The soothing and the calm, I seek repose,
> The city's noise forgot and hard stern woes,
> As thou once said 'st, the rarest sons of earth
> Have in the dust of cities shown their worth,
> Where long collision with the human curse
> Has of great glory been the frequent nurse,
> *And only those who in sad cities dwell*
> *Are of the green trees fully sensible.*

To them the silver bells of tinkling streams
Seem brighter than an angel's laugh in dreams.

The few lines italicized are highly meritorious, and the whole extract is so far decent and intelligible, that we experienced a feeling of surprise upon meeting it amid the doggerel which surrounds it. Not less was our astonishment upon finding, at page 18, a fine thought so well embodied as the following:

Or see the early stars, a mild sweet train,
Come out to bury the diurnal sun.

But, in the way of commendation, we have now done. We have carefully explored the whole volume, in vain, for a single additional line worth even the most qualified applause.

The utter *abandon*—the charming *negligé*—the perfect looseness (to use a Western phrase) of his rhythm, is one of Mr. C.'s most noticeable, and certainly one of his most refreshing, traits. It would be quite a pleasure to hear him read or scan, or to hear anybody else read or scan, such a line as this, at page 3, for example:

Masculine almost though softly carv'd in grace,

where "masculine" has to be read as a trochee, and "almost" as an iambus; or this, at page 8:

That compels me on through wood, and fell, and moor

where "that compels" has to be pronounced as equivalent to the iambus "me on;" or this, at page 18:

I leave thee, *the* maid spoke to *the* true youth,

where both the "*thes*" demand a strong accent to preserve the iambic rhythm; or this, at page 29:

So in our steps strides truth and honest trust,

where (to say nothing of the grammar, which *may* be Dutch, but is not English) it is quite impossible to get through with the "steps strides truth" without dislocating the under jaw; or this, at page 32:

The *se*rene azure *the* keen stars are now;

or this, on the same page:

Some*time* of sorrow, joy to *thy* Fu*ture;*

or this, at page 56:

Harsh action, even in repose inwardly harsh;

or this, at page 59:

Provides am*plest* enjoyment. O my brother;

or this, at page 138:

Like the swift petrel, mimicking the wave's measure;

about all of which the less we say the better.

At page 96 we read thus:

Where the untrammelled soul on her wind pinions,
Fearlessly sweeping, defies my earthly foes,
There, there upon that infinitest sea
Lady thy hope, so fair a hope, summons me.

At page 51, we have it thus:

The river calmly flows
Through shining banks, thro' lonely glen
Where the owl shrieks, tho' ne'er the cheer of men
Has stirred its mute repose;
Still if you should walk there you would go there again.

At page 136, we read as follows:

> Tune thy clear voice to no funereal song,
> *For O Death stands to welcome thee sure.*

At page 116, he has this:

> ——— These graves, you mean;
> Their histo*ry* who knows bet*ter* than I?
> For in the busy street strikes on my ear
> *Each sound, even inaudible voices*
> Lengthen the long tale my memory tells.

Just below, on the same page, he has

> I see but little difference tru*ly;*

and at page 76 he fairly puts the climax to metrical absurdity in the lines which follow:

> The spirit builds his house in *the* last flowers—
> A beautiful mansion; how the colors live,
> In*tri*cately de*li*cate!

This is to be read, of course, intrikkittly delikkit, and "intrikkittly delikkit" it is—unless, indeed, we are very especially mistaken.

The affectations—the Tennysonisms of Mr. Channing—pervade his book at all points, and are not easily particularized. He employs, for example, the word "delight" for "delighted"; as at page 2:

> Delight to trace the mountain-brook's descent,

He uses, also, all the propositions in a different sense from the rabble. If, for instance, he was called upon to say "on," he would n't say it by any means, but he 'd say "off," and endeavor to make it answer the purpose. For

"to," in the same manner, he says "from"; for "with," "of," and so on; at page 2, for example:

> Nor less in winter, 'mid the glittering banks
> Heaped *of* unspotted snow, the maiden roved,

For "serene," he says "*se*rene"; as at page 4:

> The influence of this *se*rene isle.

For "subdued," he says "*sub*dued"; as at page 16:

> So full of thought, so *sub*dued to bright fears.

By the way, what kind of fears *are* bright?

For "eternal," he says "eterne"; as at page 30:

> Has risen, *and* an eterne sun now paints.

For "friendless," he substitutes "friend*less*"; as at page 31:

> Are drawn in other figures. Not friend*less*.

To "future" he prefers "fu*ture*"; as at page 32:

> Sometime of sorrow. Joy to thy fu*ture*.

To "azure," in the same way, he prefers "a*zure*"; as at page 46:

> Ye stand each separate in the a*zure*.

In place of "unheard," he writes "*un*heard"; as thus, at page 47:

> Or think, tho' *un*heard, that your sphere is dumb.

In place of "perchance," he writes "*per*chance"; as at page 71:

> When *per*chance sorrow with her icy smile.

Instead of "more infinite," he writes "infi*nit*er," with an accent on the "nit," as thus, at page 100:

Hope's child, I summon infi*nit*er powers.

And here we might as well ask Mr. Channing, in passing, what idea he attaches to infinity, and whether he really thinks that he is at liberty to subject the adjective "infinite" to degrees of comparison. Some of these days we shall hear, no doubt, of "eternal, eternaler, and eternalest."

Our author is quite enamoured of the word "sumptuous," and talks about "sumptuous trees" and "sumptuous girls," with no other object, we think, than to employ the epithet at all hazards and upon all occasions. He seems unconscious that it means nothing more than expensive, or costly; and we are not quite sure that either trees or girls are, in America, either the one or the other.

For "loved" Mr. C. prefers to say "was loving," and takes great pleasure in the law phrase "the same." Both peculiarities are exemplified at page 20, where he says:

The maid was loving this enamoured same.

He is fond also of inversions and contractions, and employs them in a very singular manner. At page 15 he has:

Now may I thee describe a paradise.

At page 86 he says:

Thou lazy river, flowing neither way
Me figurest and yet thy banks seem gay.

At page 143 he writes:

Men change that heaven above not more;

meaning that men change so much that heaven above does not change more. At page 150 he says:

> But so much soul hast thou within thy form
> Than luscious summer days thou art the more ;

by which he would imply that the lady has so much soul within her form that she is more luscious than the luscious summer days.

Were we to quote specimens under the general head of "utter and irredeemable nonsense," we should quote nine tenths of the book. Such nonsense, we mean, as the following from page 11:

> I hear thy solemn anthem fall,
> Of richest song upon my ear,
> That clothes thee in thy golden pall
> As this wide sun flows on the mere.

Now let us translate this: He hears (Mr. Channing) a solemn anthem, of richest song, fall upon his ear, and this anthem clothes the individual who sings it in that individual's golden pall, in the same manner that, or at the time when, the wide sun flows on the mere—which is all very delightful, no doubt.

At page 37 he informs us that,

> —— It is not living,
> To a soul believing,
> To change each noble joy,
> Which our strength employs,
> For a state half rotten
> And a life of toys,

And that it is

> Better to be forgotten
> Than lose equipoise.

And we dare say it is, if one could only understand what kind of equipose is intended. It is better to be forgotten, for instance, than to lose one's equipoise on the top of a shot tower.

Occupying the whole of page 88, he has the six lines which follow, and we will present any one (the author not excepted) with a copy of the volume, if any one will tell us what they are all about :

> He came and waved a little silver wand,
> He dropped the veil that hid a statue fair,
> He drew a circle with that pearly hand,
> His grace confin'd that beauty in the air,
> Those limbs so gentle now at rest from flight,
> Those quiet eyes now musing on the night.

At page 102 he has the following :

> Dry leaves with yellow ferns, they are
> Fit wreath of autumn, while a star
> Still, bright, and pure, our frosty air
> Shivers in twinkling points
> Of thin celestial hair
> And thus one side of heaven anoints.

This we think we can explain. Let us see. Dry leaves, mixed with yellow ferns, are a wreath fit for autumn at the time when our frosty air shivers a still, bright, and pure star with twinkling points of thin celestial hair, and with this hair, or hair plaster, anoints one side of the sky. Yes—this is it—no doubt.

At page 123, we have these lines :

> My sweet girl is lying still
> In her lovely atmosphere ;
> The gentle hopes her blue veins fill
> Wtth pure silver warm and clear.

O see her hair, O mark her breast !
Would it not, O ! comfort thee,
If thou couldst nightly go to rest
By that virgin chastity ?

Yes; we think, upon the whole, it would. The eight lines are entitled a "Song," and we should like very much to hear Mr. Channing sing it.

Pages 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, and 41, are filled with short "Thoughts" in what Mr. C. supposes to be the manner of Jean Paul. One of them runs thus :

How shall I live ? In earnestness.
What shall I do ? Work earnestly.
What shall I give ? A willingness.
What shall I gain ? Tranquillity.
But do you mean a quietness
In which I act and no man bless ?
Flash out in action infinite and free
Action conjoined with deep tranquillity,
Resting upon the soul's true utterance,
And life shall flow as merry as a dance.

All our readers will be happy to hear, we are sure, that Mr. C. is going to "flash out." Elsewhere, at page 97, he expresses very similar sentiments :

My empire is myself and I defy
The external ; yes, I rule the whole or die !

It will be observed here that Mr. Channing's empire is himself (a small kingdom, however), that he intends to defy "the external," whatever that is—perhaps he means the infernals—and that, in short, he is going to rule the whole or die ; all which is very proper, indeed, and nothing more than we have to expect from Mr. C.

Again, at page 146, he is rather fierce than otherwise. He says:

> We surely were not meant to ride the sea,
> Skimming the wave in that so prisoned small,
> Reposing our infinite faculties utterly.
> Boom like a roaring sunlit waterfall.
> Humming to infinite abysms: speak loud, speak free

Here Mr. Channing not only intends to "speak loud and free" himself, but advises everybody else to do likewise. For his own part, he says, he is going to "*boom*"—"to hum and to boom"—"to hum like a roaring waterfall," and "boom to an infinite abysm." What in the name of Belzebub *is* to become of us all?

At page 39, while indulging in similar bursts of fervor and of indignation, he says:

> Thou meetest a common man
> With a delusive show of *can*,

and this passage we quote by way of instancing what we consider the only misprint in the book. Mr. Channing could never have meant to say:

> Thou meetest a common man
> With a delusive show of *can*;

for what *is* a delusive show of *can?* No doubt it should have been

> Thou meetest a little pup
> With a delusive show of tin-cup.

A can, we believe is a tin-cup, and the cup must have been tied to the tail of the pup. Boys *will* do such tricks, and there is no earthly way of preventing them,

we believe, short of cutting off their heads—or the tails of the pups.

And this remarkable little volnme is, after all, by William Ellery Channing. A great name, it has been said, is, in many cases, a great misfortune. We hear daily complaints from the George Washington Dixons, the Socrates Smiths, and the Napoleon Buonaparte Joneses, about the inconsiderate ambition of their parents and sponsors. By inducing invidious comparison, these *prænomina* get their bearers (so they say) into every variety of scrapes. If George Washington Dixon, for example, does not think proper, upon compulsion, to distinguish himself as a patriot, he is considered a very singular man; and Socrates Smith is never brought up before his honor the Mayor without receiving a double allowance of thirty days; while his honor the Mayor can assign no sounder reason for his severity than that better things than getting toddied are to be expected of Socrates. Napoleon Buonaparte Jones, on the other hand, to say nothing of being called Nota Bene Jones by all his acquaintances, is cowskinned with perfect reglarity, five times a month, merely because people will feel it a point of honor to cowskin a Napoleon Buonaparte.

And yet these gentlemen—the Smiths and the Joneses are wrong *in toto*—as the Smiths and the Joneses invariably are. They are wrong, we say, in accusing their parents and sponsors. They err in attributing their misfortunes and persecutions to the *prænomina*—to the names

assigned them at the baptismal font. Mr. Socrates Smith does not receive his double quantum of thirty days because he is called Socrates, but because he is called Socrates *Smith.* Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte Jones is not in the weekly receipt of a flogging on account of being Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte, but simply on account of being Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte *Jones.* Here, indeed, is a clear distinction. It is the surname which is to blame, after all. Mr. Smith must drop the Smith. Mr. Jones should discard the Jones. No one would ever think of taking Socrates—Socrates solely—to the watchhouse; and there is not a bully living who would venture to cowskin Napoleon Buonaparte *per se.* And the reason is plain. With nine individuals out of ten, as the world is at present happily constituted, Mr. Socrates (without the Smith) would be taken for the veritable philosopher of whom we have heard so much, and Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte (without the Jones) would be received implicitly as the hero of Austerlitz. And should Mr. Napoleon Buonaparte (without the Jones) give an opinion upon military strategy, it would be heard with the profoundest respect. And should Mr. Socrates (without the Smith) deliver a lecture or write a book, what critic so bold as not to pronounce it more luminous than the logic of Emerson, and more profound than the Orphicism of Alcott. In fact, both Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones, in the case we have imagined, would derive through their own ingenuity, a very material advantage. But no such ingenuity has been needed in the case of

Mr. William Ellery Channing, who has been befriended by Fate, or the foresight of his sponsors, and who has *no* Jones or Smith at the end of his name.

And here, too, a question occurs. There are many people in the world silly enough to be deceived by appearances. There are individuals so crude in intellect—so *green* (if we may be permitted to employ a word which answers our purpose much better than any other in the language), so green, we say, as to imagine, in the absence of any indication to the contrary, that a volume bearing upon its title-page the name of William Ellery Channing, must necessarily be the posthumous work of that truly illustrious author, the *sole* William Ellery Channing of whom anybody in the world ever heard. There are a vast number of uninformed young persons prowling about our book-shops, who will be raw enough to buy, and even to read half through this pretty little book, (God preserve and forgive them!) mistaking it for the composition of another. But what then? Are not books made, as well as razors, to sell? The poet's name *is* William Ellery Channing—is it *not?* And if a man has not a right to the use of his own name, to the use of what has he a right? And could the poet have reconciled it to his conscience to have injured the sale of his own volume by any uncalled-for announcement upon the title-page, or in a preface, to the effect that he is not his father, but only his father's very intelligent son? To put the case more clearly by reference to our old friends, Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones.

Is either Mr. Smith, when mistaken for Socrates, or Mr. Jones, when accosted as Napoleon, bound, by any conceivable species of honor, to inform the whole world —the one, that he is not Socrates, but only Socrates Smith; the other, that he is by no means Napoleon Buonaparte, but only Napoleon Buonaparte Jones?

WILLIAM WALLACE.

Among our men of genius whom, because they *are* men of genius, we neglect, let me not fail to mention WILLIAM WALLACE, of Kentucky. Had Mr. W. been born under the wings of that ineffable buzzard, *The North American Review*, his unusual merits would long ago have been blazoned to the world—as the far inferior merits of Sprague, Dana, and others of like calibre, have already been blazoned. Neither of these gentlemen has written a poem worthy to be compared with "The Chant of a Soul," published in *The Union Magazine* for November, 1848. It is a noble composition throughout —imaginative, eloquent, full of dignity, and well sus-sustained. It abounds in detached images of high merit —for example:

> Your early splendor 's gone
> Like stars into a cloud withdrawn—
> Like music laid asleep
> In dried up fountains. * * *

> Enough, I *am*, and shall not choose to die.
> No matter *what* our future fate may be,
> To live, is in itself a majesty. * * *

And Truth, arising from yon deep,
Is plain *as a white statue on a tall, dark steep.* * * *

————————Then
The earth and heaven were fair,
While only less than Gods seemed all my fellow men
Oh, the delight—the gladness—
The sense, yet love, of madness—
The glorious choral exultations—
The far-off sounding of the banded nations—
The wings of angels in melodious sweeps
Upon the mountain's hazy steeps—
The very dead astir within their coffined deeps—
The dreamy veil that wrapt the star and sod—
A swathe of purple, gold, and amethyst—
And, *luminous behind the billowing mist*
Something that looked to my young eyes like God.

I admit that the defect charged, by an envious critic, upon Bayard Taylor—the sin of excessive rhetoricianism—*is*, in some measure, chargeable to Wallace. He, now and then, permits enthusiasm to hurry him into bombast; but at this point he is rapidly improving; and, if not disheartened by the cowardly neglect of those who *dare* not praise a poetical aspirant *with* genius and *without* influence, will soon rank as one of the very noblest of American poets. In fact, he *is* so *now*.

ESTELLE ANNA LEWIS.

The maiden name of Mrs. LEWIS was Robinson. She is a native of Baltimore. Her family is one of the best in America. Her father was a distinguished Cuban of English and Spanish parentage, wealthy, influential, and

of highly cultivated mind:—from him, perhaps, Mrs. Lewis has inherited the melancholy temperament which so obviously predominates in her writings. Between the death of her father and her present comfortable circumstances, she has undergone many romantic and striking vicissitudes of fortune, which, of course, have not failed to enlarge her knowledge of human nature, and to develop the poetical germ which became manifest in her earliest infancy.

Mrs. Lewis is, perhaps the best educated, if not the most accomplished of American authoresses—using the word "accomplished" in the ordinary acceptation of that term. She is not only cultivated as respects the usual ornamental acquirements of her sex, but excels as a modern linguist, and very especially as a classical scholar; while her scientific acquisitions are of no common order. Her occasional translations from the more difficult portions of Virgil have been pronounced, by our first professors, the best of the kind yet accomplished—a commendation which only a thorough classicist can appreciate in its full extent. Her rudimental education was received, in part, at Mrs. Willard's celebrated Academy at Troy; but she is an incessant and very ambitious student, and, in this sense, the more important part of her education may be said to have been self-attained.

In character, Mrs. Lewis is every thing which can be thought desirable in woman—generous, sensitive, impulsive; enthusiastic in her admiration of beauty and virtue,

but ardent in her scorn of wrong. The predominant trait of her disposition, as before hinted, is a certain romantic sensibility, bordering upon melancholy, or even gloom. In person, she is distinguished by the grace and dignity of her form, and the nobility of her manner. She has auburn hair, naturally curling, and expressive eyes of dark hazel. Her portrait, by Elliot, which has attracted much attention, is most assuredly no flattering likeness, although admirable as a work of art, and conveying a forcible idea of its accomplished original, so far as regards the *tout ensemble*.

At an early age Miss Robinson was allied in marriage to Mr. S. D. Lewis, attorney and counsellor at law; and soon afterward they took up their residence in Brooklyn, where they have ever since continued to reside—Mr Lewis absorbed in the labors of his profession, as she in the pleasurable occupations connected with Literature and Art.

Her earliest efforts were made in *The Family Magazine*, edited by the well-known Solomon Southwick, of Albany. Subsequently she wrote much for various periodicals—in chief part for *The Democratic Review*"; but her first appearance before the public in volume-form, was in the "Records of the Heart," issued by the Appletons in 1844. The leading poems in this, are "Florence," "Zenel," "Melpomene," "Laone," "The Last Hour of Sappho," and "The Bride of Guayaquil"—all long and finished compositions. "Florence" is, perhaps, the best

of the series, upon the whole—although all breathe the true poetical spirit. It is a tale of passion and wild romance, vivid, forcible, and artistical. But a faint idea, of course, can be given of such a poem by an extract; but we cannot refrain from quoting two brief passages as characteristic of the general manner and tone:

> Morn is abroad ; the sun is up ;
> The dew fills high each lily's cup ;
> Ten thousand flowerets springing there
> Diffuse their incense through the air,
> And smiling hail the morning beam :
> The fawns plunge panting in the stream,
> Or through the vale with light foot spring,
> Insect and bird are on the wing,
> And all is bright, as when in May
> Young Nature holds a holiday.

Again:

> The waves are smooth the wind is calm ;
> Onward the golden stream is gliding
> Amid the myrtle and the palm
> And ilices its margin hiding.
> Now sweeps it o'er the jutting shoals
> In murmurs, like despairing souls,
> Now deeply, softly, flows along,
> Like ancient minstrel's warbling song ;
> Then slowly, darkly, thoughtfully,
> Loses itself in the mighty sea.

Among the minor poems in this collection is "The Forsaken," so widely known and so universally admired. The popular as well as the critical voice ranks it as the most beautiful ballad of its kind ever written.

We have read this little poem more than twenty times, and always with increasing admiration. *It is inexpressibly*

beautiful. No one of real feeling can peruse it without a strong inclination to tears. Its irresistible charm is its absolute truth—the unaffected naturalness of its thought. The sentiment which forms the basis of the composition, is, perhaps, at once the most universal and the most passionate of sentiments. No human being exists, over the age of fifteen, who has not, in his heart of hearts, a ready echo for all there so pathetically expressed. The essential poetry of the ideas would only be impaired by "foreign ornament." This is a case in which we should be repelled by the mere conventionalities of the Muse. We demand, for such thoughts, the most rigorous simplicity at all points. It will be observed that, strictly speaking, there is not an attempt at "imagery" in the whole poem. All is direct, terse, penetrating. In a word, nothing could be better done. The versification, while in full keeping with the general character of simplicity, has, in certain passages, a vigorous, trenchant euphony which would confer honor on the most accomplished masters of the art. We refer, especially to the lines:

> And follow me to my long home
> *Solemn and slow.*

And the quatrain:

> Could I but know when I am sleeping
> *Low in the ground,*
> One faithful heart would there be keeping
> *Watch all night round.*

The initial trochee here, in each instance, substituted

for the iambus, produces, so naturally as to seem accidental, a very effective echo of sound to sense. The thought included in the line "And *light* the tomb," should be dwelt upon to be appreciated in its full extent of beauty; and the verses which I have italicized in the last stanza, are poetry—poetry in the purest sense of that much misused word. They have power—indisputable power; making us thrill with a sense of their weird magnificence as we read them.

After the publication of the "Records," Mrs. Lewis contributed more continuously to the periodicals of the day—her writings appearing chiefly in the *American Review*, and the *Democratic Review*, and *Graham's Magazine*. In the autumn of 1848, Mr. G. P. Putnam published, in exquisite style, her "Child of the Sea, and other Poems"—a volume which at once placed its fair authoress in the first rank of American authors. The composition which gives title to this collection is a tale of sea-adventure—of crime, passion, love and revenge—resembling, in all the noble poetic elements, the "Corsair" of Lord Byron—from which, however, it widely differs in plot, conduct, manner, and expression. The opening lines not only give a general summary of the design, but serve well to exemplify the ruling merits of the composition:—

> Where blooms the myrtle and the olive flings
> Its aromatic breath upon the air;
> Where the sad bird of Night forever sings
> Meet anthems for the children of Despair,

Who, silently, with wild dishevelled hair,
Stray through those valleys of perpetual bloom;
Where hideous War and Murder from their lair
Stalk forth in awful and terrific gloom
Rapine and Vice disport on Glory's gilded tomb:

My fancy pensive pictures youthful Love,
Ill-starred yet trustful, truthful and sublime
As ever angels chronicled above:—
The sorrowings of Beauty in her prime;
Virtue's reward; the punishment of Crime;
The dark, inscrutable decrees of Fate;
Despair untold before in prose or rhyme;
The wrong, the agony, the sleepless hate
That mad the soul and make the bosom desolate.

One of the most distinguishing merits of the "Child of the Sea," is the admirable conduct of its narrative—in which every incident has its proper position—where nothing is inconsequent or incoherent—and where, above all, the rich and vivid interest is never, for a single moment, permitted to flag. How few, even of the most accomplished and skilful of poets, are successful in the management of a *story*, when that story has to be told in verse. The difficulty is easily analyzed. In all mere narrations there are particulars of the dullest prose, which are inevitable and indispensable, but which serve no other purpose than to bind together the true interest of the incidents—in a word, *explanatory* passages, which are yet to be "so done into verse" as not to *let down* the imagination from its pride of place. Absolutely to poetize these explanatory passages is beyond the reach of art, for prose, and that of the flattest kind, is their essentiality; but the

skill of the artist should be sufficient to gloss them over so as to *seem* poetry amid the poetry by which they are surrounded. For this end a very consummate art is demanded. Here the tricks of phraseology—quaintnesses—and rhythmical effects, come opportunely into play. Of the species of skill required, Moore, in his "Alciphron," has given us, upon the whole, the happiest exemplification; but Mrs. Lewis has very admirably succeeded in her "Child of the Sea." I am strongly tempted, by way of showing what I mean, to give here a digest of her narrative, with comments—but this would be doing the author an injustice, in anticipating the interest of her work.

The poem, although widely differing in subject from any of Mrs. Lewis' prior compositions, and far superior to any of them in general vigor, artistic skill, and assured certainty of purpose, is nevertheless easily recognizable as the production of the same mind which originated "Florence" and "The Forsaken." We perceive, throughout, the same passion, the same enthusiasm, and the same seemingly reckless *abandon* of thought and manner which I have already mentioned as characterizing the writer. I should have spoken also, of a fastidious yet most sensitive and almost voluptuous sense of beauty. These are the *general* traits of "The Child of the Sea"; but undoubtedly the chief value of the poem, to ordinary readers, will be found to lie in the aggregation of its imaginative passages—its quotable points. I give a few

of these at random:—the description of sunset upon the Bay of Gibraltar will compare favorably with any thing of a similar character ever written:

Fresh blows the breeze on Tarick's *burnished* bay;
The *silent* sew-mews bend them through the spray:

The Beauty-freighted barges bound afar
To the soft music of the gay guitar.

I quote further:—

——the oblivious world of sleep—
That rayless realm where Fancy never beams—
That Nothingness beyond the Land of Dreams. * * *

Folded his arms across his sable vest,
As if to keep the heart within his breast.
————————he lingers by the streams,
Pondering on incommunicable themes. * * *

Nor notes the fawn that tamely by him glides.
The violets lifted up their azure eyes
Like timid virgins whom Love's steps surprise. * * *

And all is hushed—so still—so silent there
That one might hear an angel wing the air. * * *

Adown the groves and dewy vales afar
Tinkles the serenader's soft guitar. * * *

——her tender cares,
Her solemn sighs, her silent streaming tears,
Her more than woman's soft solicitude
To soothe his spirit in its frantic mood. * * *

Now by the crags—then by each pendant bough
Steadies his steps adown the mountain's brow. * * *

Sinks on his crimson couch, so long unsought,
And floats along the phantom stream of thought. * * *

Ah no! for there are times when the sick soul
Lies calm amid the storms that round it roll,
Indifferent to Fate or to what haven
By the terrific tempest it is driven. * * *

The dahlias, *leaning from the golden vase,*
Peer pensively upon her pallid face,
While the sweet songster o'er the oaken door
Looks through his grate and warbles "weep no more!" * * *

—— lovely in her misery.
As jewel sparkling up through the dark sea. * * *

Where hung the fiery moon and stars of blood,
And phantom ships rolled on the rolling flood. * * *

My mind by grief was ripened ere its time,
And knowledge came spontaneous as a chime
That flows into the soul, unbid, unsought;
On Earth and Air and Heaven I fed my thought—
On Ocean's teaching's—*Ætna's lava tears—*
Ruins and wrecks and nameless sepulchres. * * *

Each morning brought to them untasted bliss.
No pangs—no sorrows came with varying years—
No cold distrust—no faithlessless—no tears—. * * *

But hand and hand as Eve and Adam trod
Eden, they walked beneath the smile of God.

It will be understood, of course, that we quote these brief passages by no means as *the best*, or even as particularly excelling the rest of the poem, on an average estimate of merit, but simply with a view of exemplifying some of the author's more obvious traits—those, especially, of vigorous rhythm, and forcible expression. In no case can the loftier qualities of a truly great poem be conveyed through the citation of its component portions, in

detail; even when long extracts are given—how much less, then, by such mere *points* as we have selected.

"The Broken Heart" (included with "The Child of the Sea") is even more characteristic of Mrs. Lewis than that very remarkable poem. It is more enthusiastic, more glowing, more passionate, and perhaps more abundant in that peculiar spirit of *abandon* which has rendered Mrs. Maria Brooks' "Zophiel" so great a favorite with the critics. "The Child of the Sea" is of course, by far the more elaborate and more artistic composition, and excels "The Broken Heart" in most of those high qualities which immortalize a work of art. Its narrative, also, is more ably conducted and more replete with incident—but to the delicate fancy or the bold imagination of a poet, there is an inexpressible charm in the latter.

The minor poems embraced in the volume published by Mr. Putnam, evince a very decided advance in *skill* made by their author since the issue of the "Records of the Heart." A nobler poem than the "La Vega" could not be easily pointed out. Its fierce energy of expression will arrest attention very especially—but its general glow and vigor have rarely been equalled.

Among the author's less elaborate compositions, however, "The Angel's Visit," written since the publication of her "Child of the Sea," is, perhaps, upon the whole, the best—although "The Forsaken" and "La Vega" are scarcely, if at all, inferior.

In summing up the autorial merits of Mrs. Lewis, all

critical opinion must agree in assigning her a high, if not the very highest rank among the poetesses of her land. Her artistic ability is unusual; her command of language great; her acquirements numerous and thorough; her range of incident wide; her invention, generally, vigorous; her fancy exuberant; and her imagination—that primary and most indispensable of all poetic requisites—richer, perhaps, than any of her female contemporaries. But as yet—her friends sincerely believe—she has given merely an earnest of her powers.

JOEL T. HEADLEY.*

THE *Reverend* Mr. HEADLEY—(why *will* he not put his full title in his title-pages?)—has in his "Sacred Mountains" been reversing the facts of the old fable about the mountains that brought forth the mouse—*parturiunt montes nascetur ridiculus mus*—for in this instance it appears to be the mouse—the little *ridiculus mus*—that has been bringing forth the "mountains," and a great litter of them, too. The epithet, funny, however, is perhaps the only one which can be considered as thoroughly applicable to the book. We say that a book is a "funny" book, and nothing else, when it spreads over two hundred pages an amount of matter which could be conveniently presented in twenty of a magazine: that a book is a

* "The Sacred Mountain." By J. T. Headley,—Author of "Napoleon and his Marshals," "Washington and his Generals," etc.

"funny" book—"only this and nothing more"—when it is written in that kind of phraseology, in which John Philpot Curran, when drunk, would have made a speech in at a public dinner: and, moreover, we do say, emphatically, that a book is a "funny" book, and nothing but a funny book, whenever it happens to be penned by Mr. Headley.

We should like to give some account of "The Sacred Mountains," if the thing were only possible—but we cannot conceive that it is. Mr. Headley belongs to that numerous class of authors, who must be read to be understood, and who, for that reason, very seldom are as thoroughly comprehended as they should be. Let us endeavor, however, to give some general idea of the work. "The design," says the author, in his preface, "is to render more familiar and life-like some of the scenes of the Bible." Here, in the very first sentence of his preface, we suspect the Reverend Mr. Headley of fibbing; for his design, as it appears to ordinary apprehension, is merely that of making a little money by selling a little book.

The mountains described are Ararat, Moriah, Sinai, Hor, Pisgah, Horeb, Carmel, Lebanon, Zion, Tabor, Olivet, and Calvary. Taking up these, one by one, the author proceeds in his own very peculiar way, to *elocutionize* about them: we really do not know how else to express what it is that Mr. Headley does with these eminences. Perhaps if we were to say that he stood up before the

reader and "made a speech" about them, one after the other, we should come still nearer the truth. By way of carrying out his design, as announced in the preface, that of rendering "more familiar and life-like some of the scenes" and so forth, he tells not only how each mountain is, and was, but how it might have been and ought to be in his own opinion. To hear him talk, anybody would suppose that he had been at the laying of the corner-stone of Solomon's Temple—to say nothing of being born and brought up in the ark with Noah, and hail-fellow-well-met with every one of the beasts that went into it. If any person really desires to know how and why it was that the deluge took place—but especially *how;* if any person wishes to get minute and accurate information on the topic, let him read "The Sacred Mountains,"—let him only listen to the Reverend Mr. Headley. He explains to us precisely how it all took place—what Noah said, and thought, while the ark was building, and what the people, who saw him building the ark said and thought about his undertaking such a work; and how the beasts, birds, and fishes looked, as they came in arm in arm; and what the dove did, and what the raven did not—in short, all the rest of it: nothing could be more beautifully posted up. What *can* Mr. Headley mean, at page 17, by the remark that "there is no one who does not lament that there is not a fuller antediluvian history"? We are quite sure that nothing that ever happened before the flood, has been omitted in the scrupu-

lous researches of the author of "The Sacred Mountains."

He might, perhaps, wrap up the fruits of these researches in rather better English than that which he employs:

Yet *still* the waters rose around them till all through the valleys nothing but little black islands of human beings *were* seen on the surface. * * * The more fixed the irrevocable decree, *the heavier* he leaned on the Omnipotent arm. * * * And lo! a solitary cloud comes drifting along the morning sky and *catches* against the top of the mountain. * * * At length emboldened by their own numbers they *assembled* tumultuously *together*. * * * Aaron never appears *so perfect* a character as Moses. * * * As he advanced from rock to rock the sobbing of the multitude that *followed after* tore his heart-strings. * * * Friends were *following after* whose sick Christ had healed. * * * The steady mountain threatened *to lift* from its base and be carried away. * * * Sometimes God's hatred of sin, sometimes his care for his children, sometimes the discipline of his church, *were* the motives. * * * Surely it was the mighty hand that *laid* on that trembling tottering mountain, etc., etc., etc.

These things are not exactly as we could wish them, perhaps:—but that a gentleman should know so much about Noah's ark and know any thing about any thing else, is scarcely to be expected. We have no right to require English grammar and accurate information about Moses and Aaron at the hands of one and the same author. For our parts, now we come to think of it, if we

only understood as much about Mount Sinai and other matters as Mr. Headley does, we should make a point of always writing bad English upon principle, whether we knew better or not.

It may well be made a question moreover, how far a man of genius is justified in discussing topics so serious as those handled by Mr. Headley, in any ordinary kind of *style*. One should not talk about Scriptural subjects as one would talk about the rise and fall of stocks or the proceedings of Congress. Mr. Headley has seemed to feel this and has therefore elevated his manner—a little. For example:

The fields were smiling in verdure before his eyes; the perfumed breezes *floated by* * * * The sun is *sailing* over the encampment. * * * That cloud was God's pavilion; the thunder was its sentinels; and the lightning the lances' points as they moved round the sacred trust * * * And how could he part with his children whom he had *borne on his brave heart* for more than forty years? * * * Thus everything conspired to render Zion the spell-word of the nation and on its summit the *heart of Israel seemed to lie and throb* * * * The sun died in the heavens; *an earthquake thundered* on to complete the dismay, etc., etc.

Here no one can fail to perceive the beauty (in an antediluvian, or at least in a Pickwickian sense) of these expressions in general, about the floating of the breeze, the sailing of the sun, the thundering of the earthquake and the throbbing of the heart as it lay on the top of the mountain.

The true artist, however, always rises as he proceeds, and in his last page or so brings all his elocution to a climax. Only hear Mr. Headley's *finale*. He has been describing the crucifixion and now soars into the sublime:

How Heaven regarded this disaster, and the Universe felt at the sight I cannot tell. I know not but tears fell like raindrops from angelic eyes when they saw Christ spit upon and struck. I know not but there was silence on high for *more* than "half an hour" when the scene of the crucifixion was transpiring,—[a scene, as well as an event, always "transpires" with Mr. Headley]—a silence unbroken save by the solitary sound of some harp-string on which unconsciously fell the agitated, trembling fingers of a seraph. I know not but all the radiant ranks on high, and even Gabriel himself, turned with the deepest solicitude to the Father's face, to see if he was calm and untroubled amid it all. I know not but his composed brow and serene majesty were all that restrained Heaven from one universal shriek of horror when they heard groans on Calvary—*dying* groans. I know not but they thought God had given his glory to another, but one thing I *do* know, [Ah, there *is* really one thing Mr. Headley knows!]—that when they saw through the vast design, comprehended the stupendous scene, the hills of God shook to a shout that never before rung over their bright tops, and the crystal sea trembled to a song that had never before stirred its bright depths, and the "Glory to God in the Highest," was a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies.

Here we have direct evidence of Mr. Headley's accuracy

not less than of his eloquence. "I know not but that" one is as vast as the other. The one thing that he does know he knows to perfection:—he knows not only what the chorus was (it was one of "hallelujahs and harping symphonies") but also how much of it there was—it was a "sevenfold chorus." Mr. Headley is a mathematical man. Moreover he is a modest man; for he confesses (no doubt with tears in his eyes) that really there is one thing that he does not know. "How Heaven regarded this disaster, and the Universe felt at the sight, I cannot tell." Only think of that! *I* cannot!—*I*, Headley, really cannot tell how the Universe "felt" once upon a time! This is downright bashfulness on the part of Mr. Headley. He *could* tell if he would only try. Why did he not inquire? Had he demanded of the Universe how it felt, can any one doubt that the answer would have been—"Prety well, I thank you, my dear Headley; how do you feel yourself?"

"Quack" is a word that sounds well only in the mouth of a duck; and upon our honor we feel a scruple in using it:—nevertheless the truth should be told; and the simple fact is, that the author of the "Sacred Mountains" is the Autocrat of all the Quacks. In saying this, we beg not to be misunderstood. We mean no disparagement to Mr. Headley. We admire that gentleman as much as any individual ever did except that gentleman himself. He looks remarkably well at all points—although perhaps best, EXAS—at a distance—as the lying Pindar says he

saw Archilochus, who died ages before the vagabond was born :—the reader will excuse the digression ; but talking of one great man is very apt to put us in mind of another. We were saying—were we not ?—that Mr. Headley is by no means to be sneered at as a quack. This might be justfiable, indeed, were he only a quack in a small way—a quack doing business by retail. But the wholesale dealer is entitled to respect. Besides, the reverend author of "Napoleon and his Marshals" was a quack to some purpose. He knows what he is about. We like perfection wherever we see it. We readily forgive a man for being a fool if he only be a *perfect* fool—and this is a particular in which we cannot put our hands upon our hearts and say that Mr. Headley is deficient. He acts upon the principle that if a thing is worth doing at all it is worth doing well :—and the thing that he "does" especially well is the public.

GEORGE P. MORRIS.

There are few cases in which mere popularity should be considered a proper test of merit ; but the case of song-writing is, I think, one of the few. In speaking of song-writing, I mean, of course, the composition of brief poems with an eye to their adaptation for music in the vulgar sense. In this ultimate destination of the song proper, lies its essence—its genius. It is the strict reference to music—it is the dependence upon modulated expression

—which gives to this branch of letters a character altogether *unique*, and separates it, in great measure and in a manner not sufficiently considered, from ordinary literature; rendering it independent of merely ordinary proprieties; allowing it, and in fact demanding for it, a wide latitude of law; absolutely insisting upon a certain wild license and *indefinitiveness*—an indefinitiveness recognized by every musician who is not a mere fiddler, as an important point in the philosophy of his science—as the *soul*, indeed, of the sensations derivable from its practice—sensations which bewilder while they enthral—and which would *not* so enthral if they did not so bewilder.

The sentiments deducible from the conception of sweet sound simply are out of the reach of analysis—although referable, possibly, in their last result, to that merely mathematical recognition of *equality* which seems to be *the root of all beauty*. Our impressions of harmony and melody, in conjunction, are more readily analyzed; but one thing is certain—that the *sentimental* pleasure derivable from music is nearly in the ratio of its indefinitiveness. Give to music any undue *decision*—imbue it with any very *determinate* tone—and you deprive it at once of its ethereal, its ideal, and, I sincerely believe, of its intrinsic and essential character. You dispel its dream-like luxury:—you dissolve the atmosphere of the mystic in which its whole nature is bound up:—you exhaust it of its breath of fäery. It then becomes a tangible and easily appreciable thing—a conception of the earth, earthy. It will not,

to be sure, lose *all* its power to please, but all that I consider the *distinctiveness* of that power. And to the *over*-cultivated talent, or to the unimaginative apprehension, this deprivation of its most delicate *nare* will be, not unfrequently, a recommendation. A *determinateness* of expression is sought—and sometimes by composers who should know better—is sought as a beauty, rather than rejected as a blemish. Thus we have, even from high authorities, attempts at absolute *imitation* in musical sounds. Who can forget, or cease to regret, the many errors of this kind into which some great minds have fallen, simply through over-estimating the triumphs of *skill*. Who can help lamenting the Battle of Pragues? What man of taste is not ready to laugh, or to weep, over their "guns, drums, trumpets, blunderbusses, and thunder"? "Vocal music," says L'Abbaté Gravina, "ought to imitate the natural language of the human feelings and passions rather than the warbling of Canary birds, which our singers now-a-days affect so vastly to mimic with their quaverings and boasted cadences." This is true only so far as the "rather" is concerned. If *any* music must imitate *any thing*, it were undoubtedly, better that the imitation should be limited as Gravina suggests.

That *indefinitiveness* which is at least, *one* of the essentials of true music, must, of course, be kept in view by the song-writer; while, by the critic, it should always be considered in his estimate of the *song*. It is, in the author, a consciousness—sometimes, merely an instinctive apprecia-

tion, of this necessity for the indefinite, which imparts to all songs, richly conceived, that free, affluent, and *hearty* manner, little scrupulous about niceties of phrase, which cannot be better expressed than by the hackneyed French word *abandonnement*, and which is so strikingly exemplified in both the serious and joyous ballads and carols of our old English progenitors. Wherever verse has been found most strictly married to music this feature prevails. It is thus the essence of all antique song. It is the soul of Homer. It is the spirit of Anacreon. It is even the genius of Æschylus. Coming down to our own times, it is the vital principle in De Béranger. Wanting this quality, no song-writer was ever truly popular, and, for the reasons assigned, no song-writer need ever expect to be so.

These views properly understood, it will be seen how baseless are the ordinary objections to songs proper, on the score of "conceit," (to use Johnson's word,) or of hyperbole, or on various other grounds tenable enough in respect to poetry not designed for music. The "conceit," for example, which some envious rivals of MORRIS have so much objected to—

> Her heart and morning broke together
> In the storm—

this "conceit" is merely in keeping with the essential spirit of the song proper. To all reasonable persons it will be sufficient to say that the fervid, hearty, free-spoken songs of Cowley and of Donne—more especially of Cunningham, of Harrington, and of Carew—abound in pre-

cisely similar things; and that they are to be met with, plentifully, in the polished pages of Moore and of Béranger, who introduce them with thought and retain them after mature deliberation.

Morris is, very decidedly, our best writer of songs—and, in saying this, I mean to assign him a high rank as *poet*. For my own part, I would much rather have written the best *song* of a nation than its noblest *epic*. One or two of Hoffman's songs have merit—but they are sad echoes of Moore, and even if this were not so (every body knows that it *is* so) they are totally deficient in the real song-essence. "*Woodman, Spare that Tree*," and "*By the Lake where Droops the Willow*" are compositions of which any poet, living or dead, might justly be proud. By these, if by nothing else, Morris is *immortal*. It is quite impossible to put down such things by sneers. The affectation of contemning them is of no avail—unless to render manifest the envy of those who affect the contempt. As mere *poems*, there are several of Morris' compositions equal, if not superior, to either of those just mentioned, but as *songs* I much doubt whether these latter have ever been surpassed. In quiet grace and unaffected tenderness, I know no American poem which excels the following:

Where Hudson's wave o'er silvery sands
  Winds through the hills afar,
Old Crow-nest like a monarch stands,
  Crowned with a single star.
And there, amid the billowy swells
  Of rock-ribbed, cloud-capped earth,

My fair and gentle Ida dwells,
  A nymph of mountain birth.

The snow-flake that the cliff receives—
  The diamonds of the showers—
Spring's tender blossoms, buds and leaves—
  The sisterhood of flowers—
Morn's early beam—eve's balmy breeze—
  Her purity define ;—
But Ida 's dearer far than these
  To this fond breast of mine.

My heart is on the hills ; the shades
  Of night are on my brow.
Ye pleasant haunts and silent glades
  My soul is with you now.
I bless the star-crowned Highlands where
  My Ida's footsteps roam :
Oh, for a falcon's wing to bear—
  To bear me to my home.

ROBERT M. BIRD.

By "The Gladiator," by "Calavar," and by "The Infidel," Dr. BIRD has risen, in a comparatively short space of time, to a very enviable reputation ; and we have heard it asserted that his novel "The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow,"* will not fail to place his name in the very first rank of American writers of fiction. Without venturing to subscribe implicitly to this latter supposition, we still think very highly of him who has written "Calavar."

Had this novel reached us some years ago, with the

* "The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow : A Tradition of Pennsylvania." By the author of "Calavar," and the "Infidel." Philadelphia : Carey, Lea, and Blanchard.

title of "*The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow: A Romance by the author of Waverley*," we should not perhaps have engaged in its perusal with as much genuine eagerness, or so dogged a determination to be pleased with it at all events, as we have actually done upon receiving it with its proper title, and under really existing circumstances. But having read the book *through*, as undoubtedly we should have done, if only for the sake of Auld Lang Syne, and for the sake of certain pleasantly mirthful, or pleasantly mournful recollections connected with "Ivanhoe," with the "Antiquary," with "Kenilworth," and above all, with that most pure, perfect, and radiant gem of fictitious literature, the "Bride of Lammermuir,"—having, we say, on this account, and for the sake of these recollections, read the novel from beginning to end, from Aleph to Tau, we should have pronounced our opinion of its merits in the following manner:

"It is unnecessary to tell us that this novel is written by Sir Walter Scott; and we are really glad to find that he has at length ventured to turn his attention to American incidents, scenery, and manners. We repeat that it was a mere act of supererogation to place the words 'By the author of Waverley' in the title-page. The book speaks for itself. The style vulgarly so-called—the manner properly so-called—the handling of the subject, to speak pictorially, or graphically, or as a German would say, plastically—in a word, the general air, the *tout ensemble*, the prevailing character of the story, all proclaim, in

words which one who runs may read, that these volumes were indited 'By the author of Waverley.'" Having said thus much we should resume our *critique* as follows: "'The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow' is, however, by no means in the *best* manner of its illustrious author. To speak plainly it is a positive failure, and must take its place by the side of the Redgauntlets, the Monasteries, the Pirates, and the Saint Ronan's Wells."

All this we should perhaps, have been induced to say had the book been offered to us for perusul some few years ago, with the suppositious title, and under the suppositious circumstances aforesaid. But alas! for our critical independency, the case is very different indeed. There can be no mistake or misconception in the present instance, such as we have so fancifully imagined. The title-page (here we have it) is clear, explanatory, and not to be misunderstood. "The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow: A Tradition of Pennsylvania,"—that is to say, a novel is written, so we are assured, not by the author of "Waverley," but by the author of that very fine romance, "Calavar,"—not by Sir Walter Scott, Baronet, but by Robert M. Bird, M.D. Now Robert M. Bird is an American.

In regard to that purely mechanical portion of this novel, which it would now be fashionable to denominate its *style*, we have very few observations to make. In general it is faultless. Occasionally we meet with a sentence ill-constructed—an inartificial adaptation of the end

to the beginning of a paragraph—a circumlocutory mode of saying what might have been better said, if said with brevity—now and then with a pleonasm, as for example—"And if he wore a mask in his commerce with men, it was like that *iron* one of the Bastile, which when put on, was put on for life, and was at the same time *of iron*," —not unfrequently with a bull proper, videlicet. "As he spoke there came into the den, eight men attired like the two first *who were included in the number*." But we repeat that upon the whole the style of the novel—if that may be called its style, which style is not—is at least *equal* to that of any American writer whatsoever. In the style *properly* so-called—that is to say, in the prevailing tone and manner which give character and individuality to the book, we cannot bring ourselves to think that Dr. Bird has been equally fortunate. His subject appears always ready to fly away from him. He dallies with it continually—hovers incessantly round it, and about it—and not till driven to exertion by the necessity of bringing his volumes to a close, does he finally grasp it with any appearance of energy or good will. "The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow" is composed with great inequality of manner—at times forcibly and manly—at times sinking into the merest childishness and imbecility. Some portions of the book, we surmise, were either not written by Dr. Bird, or were written by him in moments of the most utter mental exhaustion. On the other hand, the reader will not be disappointed, if he looks to find in the novel

many—very many—well-sustained passages of great eloquence and beauty.

"The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow," if it add a single bay to the already green wreath of Dr. Bird's *popular* reputation, will not, at all events, among men whose decisions are entitled to consideration, advance the high opinion previously entertained of his abilities. It has no pretensions to *originality* of manner, or of style—for we insist upon the distinction—and very few to originality of matter. It is, in many respects, a bad imitation of Sir Walter Scott. Some of its characters, and one or two of its incidents, have seldom been surpassed, for force, fidelity to nature, and power of exciting interest in the reader. It is altogether more worthy of its author in its scenes of hurry, of tumult, and confusion, than in those of a more quiet and philosophical nature. Like "Calavar" and "The Infidel," it excels in the drama of action and passion, and fails in the drama of colloquy. It is inferior, as a whole, to "The Infidel," and vastly inferior to "Calavar."

We must regard "Sheppard Lee," upon the whole, as a very clever, and not altogether unoriginal, *jeu d'esprit*. Its incidents are well conceived, and related with force, brevity, and a species of *directness* which is invaluable in certain cases of narration—while in others it should be avoided. The language is exceedingly unaffected and (what we regard as high praise) exceedingly well adapted to the varying subjects. Some fault may be found with the conception of the metempsychosis which is the basis

of the narrative. There are two general methods of telling stories such as this. One of these methods is that adopted by the author of "Sheppard Lee." He conceives his hero endowed with some idiosyncrasy beyond the common lot of human nature, and thus introduces him to a series of adventures which, under ordinary circumstances, could occur only to a plurality of persons. The chief source of interest in such narrative is, or should be, the contrasting of these varied events, in their influence upon a character *unchanging*—except as changed by the events themselves. This fruitful field of interest, however, is neglected in the novel before us, where the hero, very awkwardly, partially loses, and partially does not lose, his identity, at each transmigration. The sole object here in the various metempsychoses seems to be, merely the depicting of seven different conditions of existence, and the enforcement of the very doubtful moral that every person should remain contented with his own. But it is clear that both these points could have been more forcibly shown, without any reference to a confused and jarring system of transmigration, by the mere narrations of seven different individuals. All deviations, especially wide ones, from nature, should be justified to the author by some specific object—the object, in the present case, might have been found, as above-mentioned, in the opportunity afforded of depicting widely different conditions of existence actuating *one* individual.

A second peculiarity of the species of novel to which

"Sheppard Lee" belongs, and a peculiarity which is *not* rejected by the author, is the treating the whole narrative in a jocular manner throughout (inasmuch as to say "I know I am writing nonsense, but then you must excuse me, for the very reason that I know it,") or the solution of the various absurdities by means of a dream, or something similar. The latter method is adopted in the present instance—and the idea is managed with unusual ingenuity. Still—having read through the whole book, and having been worried to death with incongruities (allowing such to exist) until the concluding page, it is certainly little indemnification for our sufferings to learn that, in truth, the whole matter was a dream, and that we were very wrong in being worried about it at all. The damage is done, and the apology does not remedy the grievance. For this and other reasons, we are led to prefer, in this kind of writing, the *second* general method to which we have alluded. It consists in a variety of points—principally in avoiding, as may easily be done, that *directness* of expression which we have noticed in "Sheppard Lee," and thus leaving much to the imagination—in writing as if the author were firmly impressed with the truth, yet astonished at the immensity of the wonders he relates, and for which, professedly, he neither claims nor anticipates credence—in minuteness of detail, especially upon points which have no immediate bearing upon the general story—this minuteness not being at variance with indirectness of expression—in short, by making use of the

infinity of arts which give verisimilitude to a narration—and by leaving the result as a wonder not to be accounted for. It will be found that *bizzarreries* thus conducted, are usually far more effective than those otherwise managed. The attention of the author, who does not depend upon explaining away his incredibilities, is directed to giving them the character and the luminousness of truth, and thus are brought about, unwittingly, some of the most vivid creations of human intelleet. The reader, too, readily perceives and falls in with the writer's humor, and suffers himself to be borne on thereby. On the other hand, what difficulty, or inconvenience, or danger can there be in leaving us uninformed of the important facts that a certain hero *did not* actually discover the elixir vitæ, *could not* really make himself really invisible, and *was not* either a ghost in good earnest, or a *bonâ-fide* wandering Jew?

CORNELIUS MATHEWS.*

"Wakondah" is the composition of Mr. CORNELIUS MATHEWS, one of the editors of the monthly magazine, *Arcturus*. In the December number of the journal the poem was originally set forth by its author, very much "*avec l'air d'un homme qui sauve sa patrie.*" To be sure, it was not what is usually termed the *leading* article of the month. It did not occupy that post of honor which,

* "Wakondah; The Master of Life. A Poem." New York: George L. Curry & Co.

hitherto, has been so modestly filled by "Puffer Hopkins." But it took precedence of some exceedingly beautiful stanzas by Professor Longfellow, and stood second only to a very serious account of a supper which, however well it might have suited the taste of an Ariel, would scarcely have feasted the Anakim, or satisfied the appetite of a Grandgousier. The supper was, or might have been, a good thing. The poem which succeeded it *is not;* nor can we imagine what has induced Messrs. Curry & Co. to be at the trouble of its republication. We are vexed with these gentlemen for having thrust this affair the second time before us. They have placed us in a predicament we dislike. In the pages of *Arcturus* the poem did not come necessarily under the eye of the magazine critic. There is a tacitly understood courtesy about these matters—a courtesy upon which we need not comment. The contributed papers in any one journal of the class of *Arcturus* are not considered as *debatable* by any one other. General propositions, under the editorial head, are rightly made the subject of discussion; but in speaking of "Wakondah," for example, in the pages of our own magazine, we should have felt as if *making an occasion.* Now, upon our first perusal of the poem in question, we were both astonished and grieved that we could say, honestly, very little in its praise:—astonished, for by some means, not just now altogether intelligible to ourselves, we had become imbued with the idea of high poetical talent in Mr. Mathews:—grieved, because, under

the circumstances of his position as editor of one of the *very* best journals in the country, we had been sincerely anxious to think well of his abilities. Moreover, we felt that to *speak ill* of them, under any circumstances whatever, would be to subject ourselves to the charge of envy or jealousy, on the part of those who do not personally know us. We, therefore, rejoiced that "Wakondah" was not a topic we were called upon to discuss. But the poem is republished, and placed upon our table, and these very "circumstances of position" which restrained us in the first place, render it a positive duty that we speak distinctly in the second.

And *very* distinctly shall we speak. In fact this effusion is a dilemma whose horns *goad* us into frankness and candor—"*c'est un malheur*," to use the words of Victor Hugo, "*d'où on ne pourrait se tirer par des periphrases, par des quemadmodums, et des verumenimveros.*" If we mention it at all, we are *forced* to employ the language of that region where, as Addison has it, "they sell the best fish and speak the plainest English." "Wakondah," then, from beginning to end, is trash. With the trivial exception which we shall designate, it has *no* merit whatever; while its faults, more numerous than the leaves of Valambrosa, are of that rampant class which, if any school-boy *could* be found so uninformed as to commit them, any school-boy should be remorselessly flogged for committing.

The story, or as the epics have it, the argument, al-

though brief, is by no means particularly easy of comprehension. The design seems to be based upon a passage in Mr. Irving's "Astoria." He tells us that the Indians who inhabit the Chippewyan range of mountains, call it the "Crest of the World," and "think that Wakondah, or the Master of Life, as they designate the Supreme Being, has his residence among these aërial heights." Upon this hint Mr. Mathews has proceeded. He introduces us to Wakondah standing in person upon a mountain-top. He describes his appearance, and thinks that a Chinook would be frightened to behold it. He causes the "Master of Life" to make a speech, which is addressed, generally, to things at large, and particularly to the neighboring woods, cataracts, rivers, pinnacles, steeps, and lakes—not to mention an earthquake. But all these (and, we think, judiciously) turn a deaf ear to the oration, which, to be plain, is scarcely equal to a second-rate Piankitank stump speech. In fact, it is a barefaced attempt at animal magnetism, and the mountains, etc., do no more than show its potency in resigning themselves to sleep as they do.

Then shone Wakondah's dreadful eyes.

—then he becomes *very* indignant, and accordingly launches forth into speech the second—with which the delinquents are afflicted, with occasional brief interruptions from the poet, in proper person, until the conclusion of the poem.

The *subject* of the orations we shall be permitted to sum

up compendiously in the one term "rigmarole." But we do not mean to say that our compendium is not an improvement, and a very considerable one, upon the speeches themselves—which, taken altogether, are the queerest, and the most rhetorical, not to say the most miscellaneous orations we ever remember to have listened to outside of an Arkansas House of Delegates. In saying this we mean what we say. We intend no joke. Were it possible we would quote the whole poem in support of our opinion. But as this is *not* possible, and, moreover, as we presume Mr. Mathews has not been so negligent as to omit securing his valuable property by a copyright, we must be contented with a few extracts here and there at random, with a few comments equally so. But we have already hinted that there were really one or two words to be said of this effusion in the way of commendation, and these one or two words might as well be said now as hereafter. The poem thus commences—

> The moon ascends the vaulted sky to-night ;
> With a slow motion full of pomp ascends,
> But, mightier than the moon that o'er it bends,
> A form is dwelling on the mountain height
> That boldly intercepts the struggling light
> With darkness nobler than the planet's fire,—
> A gloom and dreadful grandeur that aspire
> To match the cheerful Heaven's far-shining might.

If we were to shut our eyes to the repetition of "might," (which, in its various inflections, is a pet word with our author, and lugged in upon all occasions,) and to the obvious imitation of Longfellow's Hymn to the Night,

in the second line of this stanza, we should be justified in calling it *good*. The "darkness nobler than the planet's fire" is *certainly* good. The general conception of the colossal figure on the mountain summit, relieved against the full moon, would be unquestionably *grand* were it not for the *bullish* phraseology by which the conception is rendered, in a great measure, abortive. The moon is described as "ascending," and its "motion" is referred to, while we have the standing figure continuously intercepting its light. That the orb would soon pass from behind the figure, is a physical fact which the purpose of the poet requires to be left out of sight, and which scarcely any other language than that which he has actually employed would have succeeded in forcing upon the reader's attention. With all these defects, however, the passage, especially, as an opening passage, is one of high merit. Looking carefully for something else to be commended, we find at length the lines—

> Lo! where our foe up through these vales ascends,
> Fresh from the embraces of the swelling sea,
> A glorious, white, and shining Deity.
> Upon our strength his deep blue eye he bends,
> With threatenings full of thought and steadfast ends;
> *While desolation from his nostril breathes*
> *His glittering rage he scornfully unsheathes*
> *And to the startled air its splendor lends.*

This again, however, is worth only qualified commendation. The first six lines preserve the personification (that of a ship) sufficiently well; but, in the seventh and eighth, the author suffers the image to slide into that of a warrior

unsheathing his sword. Still there is *force* in these concluding verses, and we begin to fancy that this is saying a *very* great deal for the author of "Puffer Hopkins."

The best stanza in the poem (there are thirty-four in all) is the thirty-third:

> No cloud was on the moon, yet on his brow
> A deepening shadow fell, and on his knees
> *That shook like tempest-stricken mountain trees*
> *His heavy head descended sad and low*
> *Like a high city smitten by the blow*
> *Which secret earthquakes strike and topling falls*
> *With all its arches, towers, and cathedrals*
> *In swift and unconjectured overthrow.*

This is, positively, not bad. The first line italicized is bold and vigorous, both in thought and expression; and the four last (although by no means original) convey a striking picture. But then the whole idea, in its general want of keeping, is preposterous. What is more absurd than the conception of a man's head descending *to his knees*, as here described—the thing could not be done by an Indian juggler or a man of gum-caoutchouc—and what is more inappropriate than the resemblance attempted to be drawn between a *single* head descending, and the *innumerable* pinnacles of a fallen city? It is difficult to understand, *en passant*, why Mr. Mathews has thought proper to give "cathedrals" a quantity which does not belong to it, or to write "unconjectured" when the rhythm might have been fulfilled by "unexpected," and when "unexpected" would have fully conveyed the meaning which "unconjectured" does not.

By dint of farther microscopic survey, we are enabled to point out one, and alas, *only* one more good line in the poem,

Green dells that into silence stretch away

contains a richly poetical thought, melodiously embodied We only refrain, however, from declaring, flatly, that the line is not the property of Mr. Mathews, because we have not at hand the volume from which we believe it to be stolen. We quote the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth stanzas in full. They will serve to convey some faint idea of the general poem. The italics are our own.

The Spirit lowers and speaks : " Tremble ye wild Woods !
Ye Cataracts ! your *organ-voices* sound !
Deep Crags, in earth by massy tenures bound,
Oh, Earthquake, *level flat !* The peace that broods
Above this world, and steadfastly eludes
Your power, howl Winds and break ; the peace that mocks
Dismay 'mid silent streams and voiceless rocks—
Through wilderness, cliffs, and solitudes.

" Night-shadowed Rivers—lift your dusky hands
And clap them harshly *with a sullen roar !*
Ye thousand Pinnacles and Steeps deplore
The glory that departs ! above *you* stands,
Ye Lakes with azure waves and snowy strands,
A power that utters forth his loud behest
Till mountain, lake, and river shall attest,
The puissance of a Master's *large commands.*"

So spake the Spirit with a wide-cast look
Of bounteous power and *cheerful* majesty ;
As if he caught a sight of either sea
And all the subject realm between : then shook
His brandished arms ; his stature scarce could brook
Its confine ; *swelling wide, it seemed to grow*

As grows a cedar on a mountain's brow
By the mad air in ruffling breezes *took!*

The woods are deaf and will not be aroused—
The mountains are asleep, they hear him not,
Nor from deep-founded silence can be wrought,
The' herded bison on their steeps have browsed;
Beneath their banks in *darksome stillness* housed
The rivers loiter like a calm-bound sea;
In anchored nuptials to dumb apathy
Cliff, wilderness, and solitude are spoused.

Let us endeavor to translate this gibberish, by way of ascertaining its import, if possible. Or, rather, let us state the stanzas, in substance. The Spirit *lowers*, that is to say, *grows angry*, and speaks. He calls upon the wild woods to tremble, and upon the cataracts to sound their voices which have the tone of an organ. He addresses, then, *an* earthquake, or perhaps earthquake in general, and requests it to *level flat* all the deep crags which are bound by massy tenures in earth—a request, by the way, which any sensible earthquake must have regarded as tautological, since it is difficult to level any thing otherwise than *flat*:—Mr. Mathews, however, is no doubt the best judge of flatness in the abstract, and may have peculiar ideas respecting it. But to proceed with the Spirit. Turning to the winds, he enjoins them to howl and break the peace that broods over this world and steadfastly eludes their power—the same peace that mocks dismay 'mid streams, rocks, et cetera. He now speaks to the night-shadowed rivers, and commands them to lift their dusky hands, and clap them harshly *with a sullen*

roar—and as *roaring* with one's *hands* is not the easiest matter in the world, we can only conclude that the rivers here reluctantly disobeyed the injunction. Nothing daunted, however, the Spirit, addressing a thousand pinnacles and steeps, desires them to deplore the glory that departs, or is departing—and we can almost fancy that we see the pinnacles deploring it upon the spot. The lakes —at least such of them as possess azure waves and snowy strands—then come in for their share of the oration. They are called upon to observe—to take notice—that above them stands no ordinary character—no Piankitank stump orator, or any thing of that sort—but a power ;—a power, in short, to use the exact words of Mr. Mathews, "that *utters forth* his loud behest, till mountain, lake, and river shall attest the puissance of a Master's *large commands.*" *Utters forth* is no doubt somewhat supererogatory, since "to utter" is of itself to emit, or send forth ; but as "the Power" appears to be somewhat excited he should be forgiven such mere errors of speech. We cannot, however, pass over his boast about uttering forth his loud behest *till* mountain, lake, and river shall obey him—for the fact is that his threat is *vox et preterea nihil*, like the countryman's nightingale in Catullus ; the issue showing that the mountains, lakes, and rivers—all very sensible creatures—go fast asleep upon the spot, and pay no attention to his rigmarole whatever. Upon the "large commands" it is not our intention to dwell. The phrase is a singularly mercantile one to be in the mouth of "a

Power." It is not impossible, however, that Mr. Mathews himself is

> —busy in the cotton trade
> And sugar line.

But to resume. We were originally told that the Spirit "lowered" and spoke, and in truth his entire speech is a scold at creation; yet stanza the eighth is so forgetful as to say that he spoke "with a wide-cast look of bounteous power and *cheerful* majesty." Be this point as it may, he now shakes his brandished arms, and, swelling out, seems to grow—

> As grows a cedar on a mountain's top—
> By the mad air in ruffling breezes *took*.

—or as swells the turkey-gobbler; whose image the poet unquestionably had in his mind's eye when he penned the words about the ruffled cedar. As for *took* instead of *taken*—why not say *tuk* at once? We have heard of chaps vot vas tuk up for sheep-stealing, and we know of one or two that ought to be tuk up for murder of the Queen's English.

We shall never get on. Stanza the ninth assures us that the woods are deaf and will not be aroused, that the mountains are asleep and so forth—all which Mr. Mathews might have anticipated. But the rest he could not have foreseen. He could not have foreknown that "the rivers, housed beneath their banks in *darksome stillness*," would "loiter like a calm-bound sea," and still less could he have been aware, unless informed of the fact, that "*cliff, wilderness, and solitude would be spoused in anchored nuptials to*

dumb apathy!" Good heavens—no!—nobody could have anticipated *that!* Now, Mr. Mathews, we put it to you as a man of veracity—what *does* it all mean?

As when in times to startle and revere.

This line, of course, is an accident on the part of our author. At the time of writing it he could not have remembered

To haunt, to startle, and waylay.

Here is another accident of imitation; for, seriously, we do not mean to *assert* that it is any thing more—

I urged the dark red hunter in his quest
Of pard or panther with a gloomy zest;
And while through darkling woods they swiftly fare
Two seeming creatures of the oak-shadowed air,
I sped the game and fired the follower's breast.

The line italicized we have seen quoted by some of our daily critics as beautiful; and so, barring the "oak-shadowed air," it is. In the meantime Campbell, in "Gertrude of Wyoming," has the *words*

—the hunter and the deer a shade.

Campbell stole the idea from our own Freneau, who has the *line*

The hunter and the deer a shade.

Between the two, Mr. Mathews' claim to originality, at this point, will, very possibly, fall to the ground.

It appears to us that the author of "Wakondah" is either very innocent or very original about matters of

versification. His stanza is an ordinary one. If we are not mistaken, it is that employed by Campbell in his "Gertrude of Wyoming"—a favorite poem of our author's. At all events it is composed of pentameters whose rhymes alternate by a simple and fixed rule. But our poet's deviations from this rule are so many and so unusually picturesque, that we scarcely know what to think of them. Sometimes he introduces an Alexandrine at the close of a stanza; and here we have no right to quarrel with him. It is not *usual* in this metre; but still he *may* do it if he pleases. To put an Alexandrine in the middle, or at the beginning, of one of these stanzas is droll, to say no more. See stanza third, which commences with the verse

Upon his brow a garland of the woods he wears,

and stanza twenty-eight, where the last line but one is

And rivers singing all aloud tho' still unseen.

Stanza the seventh begins thus:

The Spirit lowers and speaks: "Tremble ye wild Woods!

Here it must be observed that "wild Woods" is not meant for a double rhyme. If scanned on the fingers (and we presume Mr. Mathews is in the practice of scanning thus) the line is a legitimate Alexandrine. Nevertheless, it cannot be *read*. It is like nothing under the sun; except, perhaps, Sir Philip Sidney's attempt at English hexameter in his "Arcadia." Some one or two of his verses we remember. For example—

So to the | wood Love | runs as | well as | rides to the | palace;
Neither he | bears reve | rence to a | prince nor | pity to a | beggar,
But like a | point in the | midst of a | circle is | still of a | nearness.

With the aid of an additional spondee or dactyl Mr. Mathews' *very* odd verse might be scanned in the same manner, and would, in fact, be a legitimate hexameter:

The Spi | rit lowers | and speaks | "Tremble ye | wild Woods.

Sometimes our poet takes even a higher flight and *drops* a foot, or a half-foot, or, for the matter of that, a foot and a half. Here, for example, is a very singular verse to be introduced in a pentameter rhythm—

Then shone Wakondah's dreadful eyes.

Here another—

Yon full-orbed fire shall cease to shine.

Here, again, are lines in which the rhythm demands an accent on impossible syllables:

But ah! winged *with* what agonies and pangs . . .
Swiftly before me *nor* care I how vast . . .
I see vi*sions* denied to mortal eyes . . .
Uplifted longer *in* heaven's western glow . . .

But these are trifles. Mr. Mathews is young, and we take it for granted that he will improve. In the meantime what does he mean by spelling lose, *loose*, and its (the possessive pronoun) *it's*—re-iterated instances of which fashions are to be found *passim* in "Wakondah"? What does he mean by writing *dare*, the present, for *dared*, the perfect?—see stanza the twelfth. And, as we

are now in the catechetical vein, we may as well conclude our dissertation at once with a few other similar queries.

What do you mean, then, Mr. Mathews, by

A sudden silence *like a tempest* fell?

What do you mean by a "quivered stream"; "a shapeless gloom"; a "habitable wish"; "natural blood"; "oak-shadowed air"; "customary peers," and "thunderous noises"?

What do you mean by

A sorrow mightier than the midnight skies?

What do you mean by

A bulk that swallows up the sea-blue sky?

Are you not aware that calling the sky as blue as the sea, is like saying of the snow that it is as white as a sheet of paper?

What do you mean, in short, by

Its feathers darker than a thousand fears?

Is not this something like "blacker than a dozen and a half of chimney-sweeps and a stack of black cats," and are not the whole of these illustrative observations of yours somewhat upon the plan of that of the witness who described a certain article stolen as being of the size and shape of a bit of chalk? What do you *mean* by them, we say?

And here, notwithstanding our earnest wish to satisfy the author of "Wakondah," it is indispensable that we

bring our notice of the poem to a close. We feel grieved that our observations have been so much at random;—but at random, after all, is it alone possible to convey either the letter or the spirit of that which, a mere jumble of incongruous nonsense, has neither beginning, middle, nor end. We should be delighted to proceed—but how? to applaud—but what? Surely not this trumpery declamation, this maudlin sentiment, this metaphor run mad, this twaddling verbiage, this halting and doggerel rhythm, this unintelligible rant and cant! "Slid, if these be your passados and montantes, we 'll have none of them." Mr. Mathews, you have clearly mistaken your vocation, and your effusion as little deserves the title of *poem* (oh, sacred name!) as did the rocks of the royal forest of Fontainbleau that of "*mes déserts*" bestowed upon them by Francis the First. In bidding you adieu we commend to your careful consideration the remark of M. Timon, "*que le Ministre de l'Instruction Publique doit lui-même savoir parler Français.*"

WILLIAM GILMORE SIMMS.*

Mr. SIMMS, we believe, made his first, or nearly his first, appearance before an American audience with a small volume entitled "Martin Faber," an amplification of a much shorter fiction. He had some difficulty it getting

* Wiley & Putnam's Library of American Books. No. IV. The "Wigwam and the Cabin." By William Gilmore Simms. First Series.

it published, but the Harpers finally undertook it, and it did credit to their judgment. It was well received both by the public and the more discriminative few, although some of the critics objected that the story was an imitation of "Miserrimus," a very powerful fiction by the author of "Pickwick Abroad." The original tale, however, —the germ of "Martin Faber"—was written long before the publication of "Miserrimus." But independently of this fact, there is not the slightest ground for the charge of imitation. The thesis and incidents of the two works are totally dissimilar;—the idea of resemblance arises only from the absolute identity of *effect* wrought by both.

"Martin Faber" was succeeded, at short intervals, by a great number and variety of fictions, some brief, but many of the ordinary novel size. Among these we may notice "Guy Rivers," "The Partisan," "The Yemassee," "Mellichampe," "Beauchampe," and "Richard Hurdis." The last two were issued anonymously, the author wishing to ascertain whether the success of his books (which was great) had any thing to do with his mere name as the writer of previous works. The result proved that popularity, in Mr. Simms' case, arose solely from intrinsic merit, for "Beauchampe" and "Richard Hurdis" were the most popular of his fictions, and excited very general attention and curiosity. "Border Beagles" was another of his anonymous novels, published with the same end in view, and, although disfigured by some instances of bad taste, was even more successful than "Richard Hurdis."

The "bad taste" of the "Border Beagles" was more particularly apparent in "The Partisan," "The Yemassee," and one or two other of the author's earlier works, and displayed itself most offensively in a certain fondness for the purely disgusting or repulsive, where the attention was or should have been merely the horrible. The writer evinced a strange propensity for minute details of human and brute suffering, and even indulged at times in more unequivocal obscenities. His English, too, was, in his efforts, exceedingly objectionable—verbose, involute, and not unfrequently ungrammatical. He was especially given to pet words, of which we remember at present only "*hug*," "*coil*," and the compound "*old-time*," and introduced them upon all occasions. Neither was he at this period particularly dexterous in the conduct of his stories. His improvement, however, was rapid at all these points, although, on the two first counts of our indictment, there is still abundant room for improvement. But whatever may have been his early defects, or whatever are his present errors, there can be no doubt that from the very beginning he gave evidence of genius, and that of no common order. His "Martin Faber," in our opinion, is a more forcible story than its supposed prototype "Miserrimus." The difference in the American reception of the two is to be referred to the fact (we blush while recording it) that "Miserrimus" was understood to be the work of an Englishman, and "Martin Faber" was known to be the composition of an Amer-

ican, as yet unaccredited in our Republic of Letters. The fiction of Mr. Simms gave indication, we repeat, of genius, and that of no common order. Had he been even a Yankee, this genius would have been rendered *immediately* manifest to his countrymen, but unhappily (*perhaps*) he was a Southerner, and united the Southern pride —the Southern dislike to the making of bargains—with the Southern supineness and general want of tact in all matters relating to the making of money. His book, therefore, depended entirely upon its own intrinsic value and resources, but with these it made its way in the end. The "intrinsic value" consisted first of a very vigorous imagination in the conception of the story; secondly, in artistic skill manifested in its conduct; thirdly, in general vigor, life, movement—the whole resulting in deep interest on the part of the reader. These high qualities Mr. Simms has carried with him in his subsequent books; and they are qualities which, above all others, the fresh and vigorous intellect of America should and does esteem. It may be said, upon the whole, that while there are several of our native writers who excel the author of "Martin Faber" at particular *points*, there is, nevertheless, not one who surpasses him in the aggregate of the higher excellences of fiction. We confidently expect him to do much for the lighter literature of his country.

The volume now before us has a title which may mislead the reader. "The Wigwam and the Cabin" is merely a generic phrase, intended to designate the sub-

ject-matter of a series of short tales, most of which have first seen the light in the Annuals. "The material employed," says the author, "will be found to illustrate, in large degree, the border history of the South. I can speak with confidence of the general truthfulness of its treatment. The life of the planter, the squatter, the Indian, the negro, the bold and hardy pioneer, and the vigorous yeoman—these are the subjects. In their delineation I have mostly drawn from living portraits, and, in frequent instances, from actual scenes and circumstances within the memories of men."

All the tales in this collection have merit, and the first has merit of a very peculiar kind. "Grayling, or Murder will Out," is the title. The story was well received in England, but on this fact no opinion can be safely based. *The Athenæum*, we believe, or some other of the London weekly critical journals, having its attention called (no doubt through personal influence) to Carey & Hart's beautiful annual *The Gift*, found it convenient, in the course of its notice, to speak at length of some particular article, and "Murder Will Out" probably arrested the attention of the sub-editor who was employed in so trivial a task as the patting on the head an American book,—arrested his attention first from its title (murder being a taking theme with the cockney), and secondly from its details of southern forest scenery. Large quotations were made, as a matter of course, and very ample commendation bestowed—the whole criticism proving noth-

ing, in our opinion, but that the critic had not read a single syllable of the story. The *critique*, however, had at least the good effect of calling American attention to the fact that an American might possibly do a decent thing (provided the possibility were first admitted by the British sub-editors), and the result was first, that many persons read, and secondly, that all persons admired, the "excellent story in *The Gift* that had actually been called 'readable' by one of the English newspapers."

Now had "Murder Will Out" been a much worse story than was ever written by Professer Ingraham, still, under the circumstances, we patriotic and independent Americans would have declared it inimitable; but, by some species of odd accident, it happened to deserve all that the British sub-sub had condescended to say of it, on the strength of a guess as to what it was all about. It is really an admirable tale, nobly conceived, and skilfully carried into execution—the best ghost-story ever written *by an American*—for we presume that this is the ultimate extent of commendation to which we, as an humble American, dare go.

The other stories of the volume do credit to the author's abilities, and display their peculiarities in a strong light, but there is no one of them so good as "Murder Will Out."

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.*

What have we Americans accomplished in the way of satire? "The Vision of Rubeta," by Laughton Osborn, is probably our best composition of the kind: but, in saying this, we intend no excessive commendation. Trumbull's clumsy and imitative work is scarcely worth mention —and then we have Halleck's "Croakers," local and ephemeral—but what is there besides? Park Benjamin has written a clever address, with the title "Infatuation," and Holmes has an occasional scrap, piquant enough in its way—but we can think of nothing more that can be fairly called "satire." Some matters we have produced, to be sure, which were excellent in the way of burlesque —(the Poems of William Ellery Channing, for example) —without meaning a syllable that was not utterly solemn and serious. Odes, ballads, songs, sonnets, epics, and epigrams, possessed of this unintentional excellence, we should have no difficulty in designating by the dozen; but in the particular of direct and obvious satire, it cannot be denied that we are unaccountably deficient.

It has been suggested that this deficiency arises from the want of a suitable field for satirical display. In England, it is said, satire abounds, because the people there find a proper target in the aristocracy, whom they (the people) regard as a distinct race with whom they have little in common; relishing even the most virulent abuse of the upper classes with a gusto undiminished by any

* "A Fable for the Critics." New York: George P. Putnam.

feeling that they (the people) have any concern in it. In Russia, or Austria, on the other hand, it is urged, satire is unknown; because there is danger in touching the aristocracy, and self-satire would be odious to the mass. In America, also, the people who write are, it is maintained, the people who read:—thus in satirizing the people we satirize only ourselves, and are never in condition to sympathize with the satire.

All this is more verisimilar than true. It is forgotten that no individual considers himself as one of the mass. Each person, in his own estimate, is the pivot on which all the rest of the world spins round. We may abuse *the people* by wholesale, and yet with a clear conscience, so far as regards any compunction for offending any one from among the multitude of which that "people" is composed. Every one of the crowd will cry "*Encore!*—give it to them, the vagabonds!—it serves them right." It seems to us that, in America, we have refused to encourage satire, not because what we have had touches us too nearly, but because it has been too pointless to touch us at all. Its namby-pambyism has arisen, in part, from the general want, among our men of letters, of that minute *polish*—of that skill in details—which, in combination with natural sarcastic power, satire, more than any other form of literature, so imperatively demands. In part, also, we may attribute our failure to the colonial sin of imitation. We content ourselves—at this point not less supinely than at all others—with doing what not only has been done

before, but what, however well done, has yet been done *ad nauseam*. We should not be able to endure infinite repetitions of even absolute excellence; but what is "Mc Fingal" more than a faint echo from "Hudibras"? —and what is "The Vision of Rubeta" more than a vast gilded swill-trough overflowing with Dunciad and water? Although we are not all Archilochuses, however, —although we have few pretensions to the ηχεηντες ιαμβοι —although, in short, we are no satirists ourselves—there can be no question that we answer sufficiently well as subjects for satire.

"The Vision" is bold enough—if we leave out of sight its anonymous issue—and bitter enough, and witty enough, if we forget its pitiable punning on names—and long enough (Heaven knows!) and well constructed and decently versified; but it fails in the principal element of all satire—*sarcasm*—because the *intention* to be sarcastic (as in the "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," and in all the more classical satires) is permitted to render itself manifest. The malevolence *appears*. The author is never very severe, because he is at no time particularly cool. We laugh not so much at his victims as at himself, for letting them put him in such a passion. And where a deeper sentiment than mirth is excited—where it is pity or contempt that we are made to feel—the feeling is too often reflected, in its object, from the satirized to the satirist—with whom we sympathize in the discomfort of his animosity. Mr. Osborn has not many superiors in

downright invective; but this is the awkward left arm of the satiric Muse. *That* satire alone is worth talking about which at least *appears* to be the genial, good-humored outpouring of irrepressible merriment.

The "Fable for the Critics," just issued, has not the name of its author on the title-page; and, but for some slight fore-knowledge of the literary opinions, likes, dislikes, whims, prejudices, and crotchets of Mr. JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL, we should have had much difficulty in attributing so very *loose* a brochure to *him*. The "Fable" is essentially "loose"—ill-conceived and feebly executed, as well in detail as in general. Some good hints and some sparkling witticisms do not serve to compensate us for its rambling plot (if plot it can be called) and for the want of artistic finish so particularly noticeable throughout the work—especially in its versification. In Mr. Lowell's prose efforts we have before observed a certain *disjointedness*, but never, until now, in his verse—and we confess some surprise at his putting forth so unpolished a performance. The author of "The Legend of Brittany" (which is decidedly the noblest poem, of the same length, written by an American) could not do a better thing than to take the advice of those who mean him well, in spite of his fanaticism, and leave prose, with satiric verse, to those who are better able to manage them; while he contents himself with that class of poetry for which, and for which alone, he seems to have an especial vocation—the poetry of *sentiment*. This, to be sure, is *not* the very

loftiest order of verse; for it is far inferior to either that of the imagination or that of the passions—but it is the loftiest region in which Mr. Lowell can get his breath without difficulty.

Our primary objection to this "Fable for the Critics" has reference to a point which we have already touched in a general way. "The malevolence appears." We laugh not so much at the author's victims as at himself, for letting them put him in such a passion. The very title of the book shows the want of a due sense in respect to the satirical essence, *sarcasm*. This "fable"—this severe lesson—is meant "*for the Critics*." "Ah!" we say to ourselves at once—"we see how it is. Mr. L. is a poor devil poet, and some critic has been reviewing him, and making him feel very uncomfortable; whereupon, bearing in mind that Lord Byron, when similarly assailed, avenged his wrongs in a satire which he called 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,' he (Mr. Lowell) imitative as usual, has been endeavoring to get redress in a parallel manner—by a satire with a parallel title—'A Fable for the Critics.'"

All this the reader says to himself; and all this tells *against* Mr. L. in two ways—first, by suggesting unlucky comparisons between Byron and Lowell, and, secondly, by reminding us of the various criticisms, in which we have been amused (rather ill-naturedly) at seeing Mr. Lowell "used up."

The title starts us on this train of thought, and the

satire sustains us in it. Every reader versed in our literary gossip, is at once put *dessous des cartes* as to the particular provocation which engendered the "Fable." Miss Margaret Fuller, some time ago, in a silly and conceited piece of transcendentalism, which she called an "Essay on American Literature," or something of that kind, had the consummate pleasantry, after *selecting* from the list of American poets, *Cornelius Mathews and William Ellery Channing*, for especial commendation, to speak of *Longfellow* as a booby, and of *Lowell* as so wretched a poetaster "as to be disgusting even to his best friends." All this Miss Fuller *said*, if not in our precise words, still in words quite as much to the purpose. *Why* she said it, Heaven only knows—unless it was because she was Margaret Fuller, and wished to be taken for nobody else. Messrs. Longfellow and Lowell, so pointedly picked out for abuse as the *worst* of our poets, are, upon the whole, perhaps, our best—although Bryant, and one or two others, are scarcely inferior. As for the two favorites, selected just as pointedly for laudation, by Miss F.—it is really difficult to think of them, in connection with poetry, without laughing. Mr. Mathews once wrote some sonnets "On Man," and Mr. Channing some lines on "A Tin Can," or something of that kind—and if the former gentleman be not the very worst poet that ever existed on the face of the earth, it is only because he is not quite so bad as the latter. To speak algebraically: Mr. M. is *ex*ecrable, but Mr. C. is x plus I-ecrable.

Mr. Lowell has obviously aimed his "Fable" at Miss Fuller's head, in the first instance, with an eye to its ricochêtting so as to knock down Mr. Mathews in the second. Miss F. is first introduced as Miss F.——, rhyming to "cooler," and afterward as "Miranda"; while poor Mr. M. is brought in upon all occasions, head and shoulders; and now and then a sharp thing, although never very original, is said *of* them or *at* them; but all the true satiric *effect* wrought, is that produced by the satirist against himself. The reader is all the time smiling to think that so unsurpassable a—(*what* shall we call her?—we wish to be civil)—a transcendentalist as Miss Fuller, should, by *such* a criticism, have had the power to put a respectable poet in *such* a passion.

As for the plot or conduct of this "Fable," the less we say of it the better. It is so weak—so flimsy—so ill put together—as to be not worth the trouble of understanding:—something, as usual, about Apollo and Daphne. Is there *no* originality on the face of the earth? Mr. Lowell's total want of it is shown at all points—very especially in his preface of rhyming verse written without distinction by lines or initial capitals, (a hackneyed matter, originating, we believe, with *Frazer's Magazine*)—very especially also, in his long continuations of some particular rhyme—a fashion introduced, if we remember aright, by Leigh Hunt, more than twenty-five years ago, in his "Feast of the Poets"—which, by the way, has been Mr. L.'s model in many respects.

Although ill-temper has evidently engendered this "Fable," it is by no means a satire throughout. Much of it is devoted to panegyric—but our readers would be quite puzzled to know the grounds of the author's laudations, in many cases, unless made acquainted with a fact which we think it as well they should be informed of at once. Mr. Lowell is one of the most rabid of the Abolition fanatics; and no Southerner who does not wish to be insulted, and at the same time revolted by a bigotry the most obstinately blind and deaf, should ever touch a volume by this author.* His fanaticism about slavery is a mere local outbreak of the same innate wrong-headedness which, if he owned slaves, would manifest itself in atrocious ill-treatment of them, with murder of any Abolitionist who should endeavor to set them free. A fanatic of Mr. L.'s species is simply a fanatic for the sake of fanaticism, and *must* be a fanatic in whatever circumstances you place him.

His prejudices on the topic of slavery break out everywhere in his present book. M. L. has not the common honesty to speak well, even in a literary sense, of any man who is not a ranting Abolitionist. With the exception of Mr. Poe, (who has written some commendatory criticisms on his poems,) no Southerner is mentioned *at all* in this

* This "Fable *for the Critics*"—this *literary* satire—this benevolent *jeu d'esprit* is disgraced by such passages as the following:

> Forty fathers of Freedom, of whom twenty bred
> Their sons for the rice swamps at so much a head,
> And their daughters for—faugh!

"Fable." It is a fashion among Mr. Lowell's set to affect a belief that there is *no such thing* as Southern literature. Northerners—people who have really nothing to speak of as men of letters,—are cited by the dozen, and lauded by this candid critic without stint, while Legaré, Simms, Longstreet, and others of equal note are passed by in contemptuous silence. Mr. L. cannot carry his frail honesty of opinion even so far South as New York. All whom he praises are Bostonians. Other writers are barbarians, and satirized accordingly—if mentioned at all.

To show the general *manner* of the fable, we quote a portion of what he says about Mr. Poe:

> Here comes Poe with his Raven, like Barnaby Rudge—
> Three fifths of him genius, and two fifths sheer fudge;
> Who talks like a book of iambs and pentameters,
> In a way to make all men of common sense d—n metres
> Who has written some things far the best of their kind;
> But somehow the heart seems squeezed out by the mind.

We may observe here that *profound* ignorance on any particular topic is always sure to manifest itself by some illusion to "common sense" as an all-sufficient instructor. So far from Mr. P.'s talking "like a book" on the topic at issue, his chief purpose has been to demonstrate that there exists *no* book on the subject worth talking *about;* and "common sense," after all, has been the basis on which *he* relied, in contradistinction from the *un*common nonsense of Mr. L. and the small pedants.

And now let us see how far the unusual "common sense" of our satirist has availed him in the structure of

his verse. First, by way of showing what his *intention* was, we quote three accidentally accurate lines:

But a boy | he could ne | ver be right | ly defined.
As I said | he was ne | ver precise | ly unkind.
But as Ci | cero says | he won't say | this or that.

Here it is clearly seen that Mr. L. intends a line of four anapæsts. (An anapæst is a foot composed of two short syllables followed by a long.) With this observation we will now simply copy a few of the lines which constitute the body of the poem; asking any of our readers to *read them if they can*—that is to say, we place the question, without argument, on the broad basis of the very commonest "common sense":

They 're all from one source, monthly, weekly, diurnal . . .
Disperse all one's good and condense all one's poor traits . . .
The one's two thirds Norseman, the other half Greek . . .
He has imitators in scores who omit . . .
Should suck milk, strong will-giving brave, such as runs . . .
Along the far rail-road the steam-snake glide white . . .
From the same runic type-fount and alphabet . . .
Earth has six truest patriots, four discoverers of ether . . .
Every cockboat that swims clears its fierce (pop) gundeck at him . . .
Is some of it pr—— no, 't is not even prose . . .
O'er his principles when something else turns up trumps . . .
But a few silly (syllo I mean) gisms that squat 'em . . .
Nos, we don't want extra freezing in winter . . .
Plough, dig, sail, forge, build, carve, paint, make all things new.

But enough:—we have given a fair specimen of the *general* versification. It might have been better—but we

are quite sure that it *could not have been worse*. So much for "common sense," in Mr. Lowell's understanding of the term. Mr. L. should not have meddled with the anapæstic rhythm: it is exceedingly awkward in the hands of one who knows nothing about it and who *will* persist in fancying that he can write it by ear. Very especially he should have avoided this rhythm in satire, which, more than any other branch of letters, is depending upon seeming trifles for its effect. Two thirds of the force of the "Dunciad" may be referred to its exquisite finish; and had the "Fable for the Critics" been (what it is *not*) the quintessence of the satiric spirit itself, it would, nevertheless, in so slovenly a form, have failed. As it is, no failure was ever more complete or more pitiable. By the publication of a book at once so ambitious and so feeble—so malevolent in design and so harmless in execution—a work so roughly and clumsily yet so weakly constructed—so very different, in body and spirit, from any thing that he has written before—Mr. Lowell has committed an irrevocable *faux pas* and lowered himself at least fifty per cent. in the literary public opinion.

MR. GRISWOLD AND THE POETS.

That we are not a poetical people has been asserted so often and so roundly, both at home and abroad, that the slander, through mere dint of repetition, has come to be received as truth. Yet nothing can be farther removed from it. The mistake is but a portion, or corollary, of

the old dogma, that the calculating faculties are at war with the ideal; while, in fact, it may demonstrated that the two divisions of mental power are never to be found in perfection apart. The *highest* order of the imaginative intellect is always preëminently mathematical; and the converse.

The idiosyncrasy of our political position has stimulated into early action whatever practical talent we possessed. Even in our national infancy we evinced a degree of utilitarian ability which put to shame the mature skill of our forefathers. While yet in leading-strings we proved ourselves adepts in all the arts and sciences which promote the *comfort* of the animal man. But the arena of exertion, and of consequent distinction, into which our first and most obvious wants impelled us, has been regarded as the field of our deliberate choice. Our necessities have been mistaken for our propensities. Having been forced to make railroads, it has been deemed impossible that we should make verse. Because it suited us to construct an engine in the first instance, it has been denied that we could compose an epic in the second. Because we were not all Homers in the beginning, it has been somewhat too rashly taken for granted that we shall be all Jeremy Benthams to the end.

But this is the purest insanity. The principles of the poetic sentiment lie deep within the immortal nature of man, and have little necessary reference to the worldly circumstances which surround him. The poet in Arcady

is, in Kamschatka, the poet still. The self-same Saxon current animates the British and the American heart; nor can any social, or political, or moral, or physical conditions do more than momentarily repress the impulses which glow in our own bosoms as fervently as in those of our progenitors.

Those who have taken most careful note of our literature for the last ten or twelve years, will be most willing to admit that *we are* a poetical people; and in no respect is the fact more plainly evinced than in the eagerness with which books professing to compile or select from the productions of our native bards, are received and appreciated by the public. Such books meet with success, at least with sale, at periods when the general market for literary wares is in a state of stagnation; and even the ill taste displayed in some of them has not sufficed to condemn.

The "Specimens of American Poetry," by Kettell; the "Common-place Book of American Poetry," by Cheever; a Selection by General Morris; another by Mr. Bryant; the "Poets of America," by Mr. Keese—all these have been widely disseminated and well received. In some measure, to be sure, we must regard their success as an affair of personalities. Each individual, honored with a niche in the compiler's memory, is naturally anxious to possess a copy of the book so honoring him; and this anxiety will extend, in some cases, to ten or twenty of the immediate friends of the complimented; while, on

the other hand, purchasers will arise, in no small number, from among a very different class—a class animated by very different feelings. I mean the omitted—the large body of those who, supposing themselves entitled to mention, have yet been unmentioned. These buy the unfortunate book as a matter of course, for the purpose of abusing it with a clear conscience and at leisure. But holding these deductions in view, we are still warranted in believing that the demand for works of the kind in question is to be attributed, mainly, to the general interest of the subject discussed. The public have been desirous of obtaining a more distinct view of our poetical literature than the scattered effusions of our bards and the random criticisms of our periodicals could afford. But, hitherto, nothing has been accomplished in the way of supplying the *desideratum*. The "specimens" of Kettell were specimens of nothing but the ignorance and ill taste of the compiler. A large proportion of what he gave to the world as American poetry, to the exclusion of much that was really so, was the doggerel composition of individuals unheard of and undreamed of, except by Mr. Kettell himself. Mr. Cheever's book did not belie its title, and was excessively "commonplace." The selection by General Morris was in so far good, that it accomplished its object to the full extent. This object looked to nothing more than single, brief extracts from the writings of every one in the country who had established even the slightest reputation as a poet. The ex-

tracts, so far as our truer poets were concerned, were tastefully made; but the proverbial kind feeling of the General seduced him into the admission of an inordinate quantity of the purest twattle. It was gravely declared that we had more than *two hundred* poets in the land. The compilation of Mr. Bryant, from whom much was expected, proved a source of mortification to his friends, and of astonishment and disappointment to all; merely showing that a poet is, necessarily, neither a critical nor an impartial judge of poetry. Mr. Keese succeeded much better. He brought to his task, if not the most rigorous impartiality, at least a fine taste, a sound judgment, and a more thorough acquaintance with our poetical literature that had distinguished either of his predecessors.

Much, however, remained to be done; and here it may be right to inquire—"What should be the aim of every compilation of the character now discussed?" The object, in general terms, may be stated, as the conveying, within moderate compass, a distinct view of our poetry and of our poets. This, in fact, is the demand of the public. A book is required, which shall not so much be the reflection of the compiler's peculiar views and opinions upon poetry in the abstract, as of the popular judgment upon such poetical works as have come immediately within its observation. It is not the author's business to insist upon his own theory, and, in its support, to rake up from the by-ways of the country the "inglorious Miltons" who may, possibly, there abound; neither, because ill

according with this theory, is it his duty to dethrone and reject those who have long maintained supremacy in the estimation of the people. In this view, it will be seen that regard must be paid to the mere *quantity* of a writer's effusions. He who has published much, is not to be omitted because, in the opinion of the compiler, he has written nothing fit for publication. On the other hand, he who has extemporized a single song, which has met the eye of no one but our bibliographer, is not to be set forth among the poetical magnates, even although the one song itself be esteemed equal to the very best of Bérangér.

Of the two classes of sins—the negative and the positive—those of omission and those of commission—obvious ones of the former class are, beyond doubt, the more unpardonable. It is better to introduce half a dozen "great unknowns," than to give the "cut direct" to a single individual who has been fairly acknowledged as known. The public, in short, seem to demand *such a compendium of our poetical literature as shall embrace specimens from those works alone, of our recognized poets, which, either through accident, or by dint of merit, have been most particularly the subjects of public discussion.* We wish this, that we may be put in condition to decide for ourselves upon the justice or injustice of the reputation attained. In critical opinion much diversity exists; and, although there is one true and tenable critical opinion, there are still a thousand, upon all topics, which, being only the shadows,

have all the outlines, and assume all the movements, of the substance of truth. Thus any critic who should exclude from the compendium all which tallied not with his individual ideas of the Muse, would be found to exclude nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of that which the public at large, embracing *all* varieties of opinion, has been accustomed to acknowledge as poesy.

These remarks apply only to the admission or rejection of poetical specimens. The public being put fairly in possession of the matter debated, with the provisions above mentioned, the analysis of individual claims, *so far as the specimens extend*, is not only not unbecoming in the compiler, but a thing to be expected and desired. To this department of his work he should bring analytical ability; a distinct impression of the nature, the principles, and the aims of poetry; a thorough contempt for all prejudice at war with principle; a poetic sense of the poetic; sagacity in the detection, and audacity in the exposure, of demerit; in a word, talent *and faith;* the lofty honor which places mere courtesy beneath its feet; the boldness to praise an enemy, and the more unusual courage to damn a friend.

It is, in fact, by the criticism of the work, that the public voice will, in the end, decide upon its merits. In proportion to the ability or incapacity here displayed, will it, sooner or later, be approved or condemned. Nevertheless, the mere *compilation* is a point, perhaps, of greater importance. With the meagre published *aids* existing

previously to Mr. GRISWOLD'S book, the labor of such an undertaking must have been great; and not less great the industry and general information in respect to our literary affairs, which have enabled him so successfully to prosecute it.

The work before us* is indeed so vast an improvement upon those of a similar character which have preceded it, that we do its author some wrong in classing all together. Having explained, somewhat minutely, our views of the proper mode of compilation, and of the general aims of the species of book in question, it but remains to say that these views have been very nearly fulfilled in the "Poets and Poetry of America," while altogether unsatisfied by the earlier publications.

The volume opens with a preface, which, with some little supererogation, is addressed "To the Reader"; inducing very naturally the query, whether the whole book is not addressed to the same individual. In this preface, which is remarkably well written and strictly to the purpose, the author thus evinces a just comprehension of the nature and objects of true poesy:

He who looks on Lake George, or sees the sun rise on Mackinaw, or listens to the grand music of a storm, is divested, certainly for a time, of a portion of the alloy of his nature. The elements of power in all sublime sights and heavenly harmonies, should live in the poet's song, to which they can be

* "The Poets and Poetry of America": with an Historical Introduction. By Rufus W. Griswold. Philadelphia: Carey & Hart.

transferred only by him who possesses the creative faculty. The sense of beauty, next to the miraculous divine suasion, is the means through which the human character is purified and elevated. *The creation of beauty, the manifestation of the real by the ideal, "in words that move in metrical array," is poetry.*

The italics are our own; and we quote the passage because it embodies the *sole true* definition of what has been a thousand times erroneously defined.

The earliest specimens of poetry presented in the body of the work, are from the writings of Philip Freneau, "one of those worthies who, both with lyre and sword, aided in the achievement of our independence." But, in a volume professing to treat, generally, of the "Poets and Poetry of America," some mention of those who versified before Freneau, would of course, be considered desirable. Mr. Griswold has included, therefore, most of our earlier votaries of the Muse, with many specimens of their powers, in an exceedingly valuable "Historical Introduction"; his design being to exhibit as well "*the progress* as the condition of poetry in the United States."

The basis of the compilation is formed of short biographical and critical notices, with selections from the works of, in all, eighty-seven authors, chronologically arranged. In an appendix at the end of the volume, are included specimens from the works of sixty, whose compositions have either been too few, or in the editor's opinion too *mediocres*, to entitle them to more particular notice. To each of these specimens are appended foot

notes, conveying a brief biographical summary, without any thing of critical disquisition.

Of the general plan and execution of the work we have already expressed the fullest approbation. We know no one in America who could, or *who would*, have performed the task here undertaken, at once so well in accordance with the judgment of the critical, and so much to the satisfaction of the public. The labors, the embarrassments, the great difficulties of the achievement are not easily estimated by those before the scenes.

In saying that, individually, we disagree with many of the opinions expressed by Mr. Griswold, is merely suggesting what, in itself, would have been obvious without the suggestion. It rarely happens that any two persons thoroughly agree upon any one point. It would be mere madness to imagine that any two could coincide in every point of a case where exists a multiplicity of opinions upon a multiplicity of points. There is no one who, reading the volume before us, will not in a thousand instances, be tempted to throw it aside, because its prejudices and partialities are, in a thousand instances, altogether at war with his own. But when so tempted, he should bear in mind, that had the work been that of Aristarchus himself, the discrepancies of opinion would still have startled him and vexed him as now.

We disagree then, with Mr. Griswold in *many* of his critical estimates; although in general, we are proud to find his decisions our own. He has omitted from the

body of his book, some one or two whom we should have been tempted to introduce. On the other hand, he has scarcely made us amends by introducing some one or two dozen whom we should have treated with contempt. We might complain too of a prepossession, evidently unperceived by himself, for the writers of New England. We might hint also, that in two or three cases, he has rendered himself liable to the charge of personal partiality; it is often so *very* difficult a thing to keep separate in the mind's eye, our conceptions of the poetry of a friend, from our impressions of his good fellowship and our recollections of the flavor of his wine.

But having said thus much in the way of fault-finding, we have said all. The book should be regarded as *the most important addition which our literature has for many years received.* It fills a void which should have been long ago supplied. It is written with judgment, with dignity and candor. Steering with a dexterity not to be sufficiently admired, between the Scylla of Prejudice on the one hand, and the Charybdis of Conscience on the other, Mr. Griswold in the "Poets and Poety of America," has entitled himself to the thanks of his countrymen, while showing himself a man of taste, talent, *and tact.*

"The Female Poets of America" * is a large volume, to match "The Poets and Poetry of America," "The Prose Authors of America," and "The Poets and Poetry

* "The Female Poets of America." By Rufus Wilmot Griswold. Philadelphia: Carey & Hart.

of England,"—all of which have been eminently and justly successful. These works have indisputable claims upon public attention as critical summaries, at least, of literary merit and demerit. Their great and most obvious value, as affording *data* or material for criticism—as mere collections of the best specimens in each department, and as records of fact, in relation not more to books than to their authors—has in some measure overshadowed their more important merit of the series: for these works have often, and in fact very generally, the positive merits of discriminative criticism, and of honesty—*always* the more negative merit of strong common-sense. The best of the series is, beyond all question, "The Prose Authors of America." This is a book of which any critic in the country might well have been proud, without reference to the mere industry and research manifested in its compilation. These are truly remarkable; but the vigor of comment and force of style are not less so; while more independence and self-reliance are manifested than in any other of the series. There is not a weak paper in the book; and some of the articles are able in all respects. The truth is that Mr. Griswold's intellect is more at home in Prose than Poetry. He is a better judge of fact than of fancy; not that he has not shown himself quite competent to the task undertaken in "The Poets and Poetry of America," or of England, or in the work now especially before us. In this latter, he has done no less credit to himself than to the numerous lady-poets whom he dis-

cusses—and many of whom he now first introduces to the public. We are glad, for Mr. Griswold's sake, as well as for the interests of our literature generally, to perceive that he has been at the pains of doing what Northern critics seem to be at great pains *never* to do—that is to say, he has been at the trouble of doing justice, in a great measure, to several poetesses who have not had the good fortune to be born in the North. The notices of the Misses Carey, of the Misses Fuller, of the sisters Mrs. Warfield and Mrs. Lee, of Mrs. Nichols, of Mrs. Welby, and of Miss Susan Archer Talley, reflect credit upon Mr. Griswold, and show him to be a man not more of taste than—shall we say it?—of courage. Let our readers be assured that, (as matters are managed among the four or five different *cliques* who control our whole literature in controlling the larger portion of our critical journals,) it requires no small amount of *courage*, in an author whose subsistence lies in his pen, to *hint*, even, that any thing good, in a literary way, can, by any possibility, exist out of the limits of a certain narrow territory. We repeat that Mr. Griswold deserves our thanks, under such circumstances, for the cordiality with which he has recognized the poetical claims of the ladies mentioned above. He has *not*, however, done one or two of them that *full* justice which, ere long, the public will take upon itself the task of rendering them. We allude especially to the case of Miss Talley. Mr. Griswold praises her highly; and we would admit that it

would be expecting of him too much, just at present, to hope for his avowing, of Miss Talley, what *we* think of her, and what one of our best known critics has distinctly avowed—that she ranks already with *the best* of American poetesses, and in time will surpass them all—that her demerits are those of inexperience and excessive sensibility (betraying her, unconsciously, into imitation), while her merits are those of unmistakable *genius*. We are proud to be able to say, moreover, in respect to another of the ladies referred to above, that one of her poems is *decidedly the noblest poem in the collection*—although the most distinguished poetesses in the land have here included their most praiseworthy compositions. Our allusion is to Miss Alice Carey's "Pictures of Memory." Let our readers see it and judge for themselves. We speak deliberately:—in all the higher elements of poetry—in true imagination—in the power of exciting the only real poetical effect—elevation of *the soul*, in contradistinction from mere excitement of the intellect or heart—the poem in question is the noblest in the book.

"The Female Poets of America" includes ninety-five names—commencing with Ann Bradstreet, the contemporary of the once world-renowned Du Bartas—him of the "nonsense-verses"—the poet who was in the habit of styling the sun the "Grand Duke of Candles"—and ending with "Helen Irving"—a *nom de plume* of Miss Anna H. Phillips. Mr. Griswold gives most space to Mrs. Maria Brooks (*Maria del Occidente*), *not*, we hope and be-

lieve, merely because Southey has *happened* to commend her. The claims of this lady we have not yet examined so thoroughly as we could wish, and we will speak more fully of her hereafter, perhaps. In point of actual merit—that is to say of actual accomplishment, without reference to mere indications of the ability to accomplish —we would rank the first dozen or so in this order (leaving out Mrs. Brooks for the present)—Mrs. Osgood—*very decidedly first*—then Mrs. Welby, Miss Carey (or the Misses Carey), Miss Talley, Mrs. Whitman, Miss Lynch, Miss Frances Fuller, Miss Lucy Hooper, Mrs. Oakes Smith, Mrs. Ellet, Mrs. Hewitt, Miss Clarke, Mrs. Lewis, Mrs. Nichols, Mrs. Warfield (with her sister, Mrs. Lee), Mrs. Eames, and Mrs. Sigourney. If Miss Lynch had as much imagination as energy of expression and artistic power, we would place her next to Mrs. Osgood. The most *skilful merely*, of those just mentioned, are Mrs. Osgood, Miss Lynch, and Mrs. Sigourney. The most imaginative are Miss Carey, Mrs. Osgood, Miss Talley, and Miss Fuller. The most accomplished are Mrs. Ellet, Mrs. Eames, Mrs. Lewis, Mrs. Whitman, and Mrs. Oakes Smith. The most popular are Mrs. Osgood, Mrs. Oakes Smith, and Miss Hooper.

MR. LONGFELLOW AND OTHER PLAGIARISTS.

A DISCUSSION WITH "OUTIS."

FOR the *Evening Mirror* of January 14 (1846), before my editorial connection with the *Broadway Journal*, I furnished a brief criticism on Professor Longfellow's "Waif." In the course of my observations, I collated a poem called "*The* Death-Bed," and written by Hood, with one by Mr. Aldrich, entitled "*A* Death-Bed." The criticism ended thus:

We conclude our notes on the "Waif" with the observation that, although full of beauties, it is infected with a *moral taint* —or is this a mere freak of our own fancy? We shall be pleased if it be so;—but there *does* appear, in this little volume, a very careful avoidance of all American poets who may be supposed especially to interfere with the claims of Mr. Longfellow. These men Mr. Longfellow can continuously *imitate* (*is* that the word?) and yet never even incidentally commend.

Much discussion ensued. A friend of Mr. Longfellow's penned a defence, which had at least the merit of being

thoroughly impartial; for it defended Mr. L. not only from the one tenth of very moderate disapproval in which I had indulged, but from the nine tenths of my enthusiastic admiration into the bargain. The fact is, if I was *not* convinced that in ninety-nine hundredths of all that I had written about Mr. Longfellow I was decidedly in the wrong, at least it was no fault of Mr. Longfellow's very luminous friend. This well-intended defence was published in the *Mirror*, with a few words of preface by Mr. Willis, and of postscript by myself. Still dissatisfied, Mr. L., through a second friend, addressed to Mr. Willis an expostulatory letter, of which the *Mirror* printed only the following portion:

> It has been asked, perhaps, why Lowell was neglected in this collection? Might it not as well be asked why Bryant, Dana, and Halleck were neglected? The answer is obvious to any one who candidly considers the character of the collection. It professed to be, according to the Poem, from the humbler poets; and it was intended to embrace pieces that were anonymous, or which were easily accessible to the general reader—the *waifs* and *estrays* of literature. To put any thing of Lowell's, for example, into a collection of *waifs* would be a particular liberty with pieces which are all collected and christened.

Not yet content, or misunderstanding the tenor of some of the wittily-*put* comments which accompanied the quotation, the aggrieved poet, through one of the two friends as before, or perhaps through a third, finally prevailed on

the good nature of Mr. Willis to publish an explicit declaration of his disagreement with "*all* the disparagement of Longfellow" which had appeared in the criticism in question.

Now when we consider that many of the points of censure made by me in this *critique* were absolutely as plain as the nose upon Mr. Longfellow's face—that it was impossible to gainsay them—that we defied him and his coadjutors to say a syllable in reply to them—and that they held their tongues and not a syllable said,—when we consider all this, I say, then the satire of the "*all*" in Mr. Willis' manifesto becomes apparent at once. Mr. Longfellow did not see it; and I presume his friends did not see it. I did. In my mind's eye it expanded itself thus: "My dear sir, or sirs, what will you have? You are an insatiable set of cormorants, it is true; but if you will only let me know what you desire, I will satisfy you, if I die for it. Be quick!—merely say what it is you wish me to admit, and (for the sake of getting rid of you) I will admit it upon the spot. Come! I will grant at once that Mr. Longfellow is Jupiter Tonans, and that his three friends are the Graces, or the Furies, whichever you please. As for a fault to be found with either of you, *that* is impossible, and I say so. I disagree with *all*—with every syllable—of the disparagement that ever has been whispered against you up to this date, and (not to stand upon trifles) with all that ever *shall* be whispered against you henceforward, forever and forever. May I hope at length that

these assurances will be sufficient?" But if Mr. Willis really hoped any thing of the kind he was mistaken.

In the meantime Mr. Briggs, in the *Broadway Journal*, did me the honor of taking me to task for what he supposed to be my insinuations against Mr. Aldrich. My reply (in the *Mirror*), prefaced by a few words from Mr. Willis, ran as follows:

Much interest has been given in our literary circles of late to the topic of plagiarism. About a month ago a very eminent critic connected with this paper took occasion to point out a *parallelism* between certain lines of Thomas Hood and certain others which appeared in the collection of American poetry edited by Mr. Griswold. Transcribing the passages, he ventured the assertion that "*somebody* is a thief." The matter had been nearly forgotten, if not altogether so, when a "good-natured friend" of the American author (whose name had by us never been mentioned) considered it advisable to re-collate the passages, with the view of convincing the public (and himself) that no plagiarism is chargeable to the party of whom he thinks it chivalrous to be the "good-natured friend." For our own part, should *we* ever be guilty of an indiscretion of this kind, we deprecate all aid from our "good-natured friends,"—but in the meantime it is rendered necessary that once again we give publicity to the collation of poems in question. Mr. Hood's lines run thus:

> We watched her breathing through the night,
> Her breathing soft and low,
> As in her breast the wave of life
> Kept heaving to and fro.

So silently we seemed to speak,
So slowly moved about,
As we had lent her half our powers
To eke her being out.

Our very hope belied our fears;
Our fears our hope belied;
We thought her dying when she slept,
And sleeping when she died.

But when the morn came dim and sad,
And chill with early showers,
Her quiet eyelids closed;—she had
Another morn than ours.

Mr. Aldrich's thus:

Her sufferings ended with the day,
Yet lived she at its close,
And breathed the long, long night away
In statue-like repose;

But when the sun in all its state
Illumined the eastern skies,
She passed through Glory's morning gate,
And walked in paradise.

And here, to be sure, we might well leave a decision in the case to the verdict of common-sense. But since the *Broadway Journal* insists upon the "no resemblance," we are constrained to point out especially where our supposed similarity lies. In the first place, then, the subject in both pieces is *death*. In the second, it is the death of a woman. In the third, it is the death of a woman *tranquilly* dying. In the fourth, it is the death of a woman who lies tranquilly *throughout the night*. In the fifth, it is the death of a woman whose "*breathing* soft and low is watched through the night," in the one instance, and who "*breathed* the long, long night away in statue-like repose,"

in the other. In the sixth place, in both poems this woman dies just at daybreak. In the seventh place, dying just at daybreak, this woman, in both cases, steps directly into Paradise. In the eighth place, all these identities of circumstance are related in identical rhythms. In the ninth place, these identical rhythms are arranged in identical metres ; and, in the tenth place, these identical rhythms and metres are constructed into identical stanzas.

At this point the matter rested for a fortnight, when a fourth friend of Mr. Longfellow took up the cudgels for him and Mr. Aldrich conjointly, in another communication to the *Mirror*. I copy it in full.

PLAGIARISM.—*Dear Willis*—Fair play is a jewel, and I hope you will let us have it. I have been much amused, by some of the efforts of your critical friend, to convict Longfellow of imitation, and Aldrich and others of plagiarism. What *is* plagiarism? And what constitutes a good ground for the charge? Did no two men ever think alike without stealing one from the other? or, thinking alike, did no two men ever use the same, or similar words, to convey the thoughts, and that, without any communication with each other? To deny it would be absurd. It is a thing of every-day occurrence. Some years ago, a letter was written from some part of New England, describing one of those scenes, not very common during what is called "the January thaw," when the snow, mingled with rain, and freezing as it falls, forms a perfect covering of ice upon every object. The storm clears away suddenly, and the moon comes up. The letter proceeds—"*every tree and*

*shrub, as far as the eye can reach, of pure transparent glass—a perfect garden of moving, waving, breathing crystals. * * * Every tree is a diamond chandelier, with a whole constellation of stars clustering to every socket,*" etc. This letter was laid away where such things usually are, in a private drawer, and did not see the light for many years. But the very next autumn brought out, among the splendid annuals got up in the country, a beautiful poem from Whittier, describing the same, or rather a similar scene, in which the line

The trees, like crystal chandeliers

was put in italics by every reviewer in the land, for the exceeding beauty of the imagery. Now *the letter* was written, probably, about the same time with the *poem*, though the poem was not published till nearly a year after. The writers were not, and never have been, acquainted with each other, and neither could possibly have seen the work of the other before writing. Now, was there any plagiarism here? Yet there are plenty of "*identities*." The author of the letter, when urged, some years after, to have it published, consented very reluctantly, through fear that *he* should be charged with theft; and, very probably, the charge has been made, though I have never seen it. May not this often occur? What is more natural? Images are not created, but suggested. And why not the same images, when the circumstances are precisely the same, to different minds? Perhaps your critic will reply, that the case is different after one of the compositions is published. How so? Does he or you or anybody read every thing that is published? I am a great admirer, and a general reader of poetry. But, by what accident I do not know I had never seen the beautiful

lines of Hood, till your critical friend brought them to my notice in the *Mirror*. It is certainly possible that Aldrich had not seen them several years ago—and more than probable that Hood had not seen Aldrich's. Yet your friend affects great sympathy for both, in view of their better compunctions of conscience, for their literary piracies.

But, after all, wherein does the real resemblance between these two compositions consist? Mr. ———, I had almost named him, finds nearly a dozen points of resemblance. But when he includes rhythm, metre, and stanza among the dozen, he only shows a bitter resolution to make out a case, and not a disposition to do impartial justice. Surely the critic himself, who is one of our finest *poets*, does not mean to deny that these mere externals are the common property of all bards. He does not feel it necessary to strike out a new stanza, or to invent new feet and measures, whenever he would clothe his "breathing thoughts in words that burn." Again, it is not improbable that, within the period of time since these two writers, Hood and Aldrich, came on the stage, ten thousand *females* have *died*, and *died tranquilly*, and *died just at daybreak*, and that *after passing a tranquil night*, and, so dying, were supposed by their friends to have passed at once to a better world, a *morning in heaven*. The poets are both describing an actual, and not an imaginary occurrence. And here—including those before mentioned, which are common property—are *nine* of the critic's *identities*, which go to make up the evidence of plagiarism. The last six, it requires no stretch of the imagination to suppose, they might each have seen and noticed separately. The most of them, one other poet at least, *has*

noticed, many years ago, in a beautiful poem on these words of the angel to the wrestling Jacob—"Let me go, for the day breaketh." Wonder if Hood ever saw that? The few remaining "identities" are, to my mind, sufficiently disposed of by what I have already said. I confess I was not able, until the appearance of the critic's second paper, in which he brought them out specially, "marked, numbered, and labelled," to perceive the resemblance on which the grave charge of literary piracy, and moral dishonesty of the meanest kind, was based. In view of all the glaring improbabilities of such a case, a critic should be very slow to make such a charge. I say *glaring improbabilities*, for it seems to me that no circumstantial evidence could be sufficient to secure a verdict of *theft* in such a case. Look at it. A man who aspires to fame, who seeks the esteem and praise of the world, and lives upon his reputation, as his vital element, attempts to win his object—how? By stealing, in open day, the finest passages, the most beautiful thoughts (no others are worth stealing), and the rarest images of another, and claiming them as his own; and that, too, when he knows that every competitor for fame, and every critical tribunal in the world, as well as the real owner, will be ready to *identify* the borrowed plumes in a moment, and cry him down as a *thief*. A madman, an idiot, if he were capable of such an achievement, might do it, but no other. A rogue may steal what he can conceal in his pocket, or his chest—but one must be utterly *non compos*, to steal a splendid shawl, or a magnificent plume, which had been admired by thousands for its singular beauty, for the purpose of sporting it in Broadway. In nine hundred and ninety-nine

cases of a thousand, such charges are absurd, and indicate rather the carping littleness of the critic, than the delinquency of his victim.

Pray did you ever think the worse of Dana because your friend, John Neal, charged him with pirating upon Paul Allen, and Bryant, too, in his poem of "THE DYING RAVEN"? or of yourself, because the same friend thought he had detected you in the very act of stealing from Pinckney, and Miss Francis, now Mrs. Child? Surely not. Everybody knows that John Neal wishes to be supposed to have read every thing that ever was written, and never had forgotten any thing. He delights, therefore, in showing up such resemblances.

And now—for the matter of Longfellow's imitations. In what do they consist? The critic is not very specific in this charge. Of what kind are they? Are they imitations of thought? Why not call them *plagiarisms* then, and show them up? Or are they only verbal imitations of style? Perhaps *this* is one of them, in his poem on the "Sea Weed":

> ——— *drifting, drifting, drifting*
> On the shifting
> Currents of the restless main,

resembling, in form and collocation only, a line in a beautiful and very powerful poem of Mr. EDGAR A. POE. (Write it rather EDGAR, a *Poet*, and then it is right to a T.) I have not the poem before me, and have forgotten its title. But he is describing a magnificent intellect in ruins, if I remember rightly—and, speaking of the eloquence of its better days, represents it as

> ——— *flowing, flowing, flowing*
> Like a river.

Is this what the critic means? Is it *such* imitations as this that he alludes to? If not, I am at fault, either in my reading of Longfellow, or in my general familiarity with the American poets. If this *be* the kind of imitation referred to, permit me to say, the charge is too paltry for any man, who valued his reputation either as a gentleman or a scholar, to make. Who, for example, would wish to be guilty of the littleness of detracting from the uncommon merit of that remarkable poem of this same Mr. Poe's, recently published in the *Mirror*, from the *American Review*, entitled "THE RAVEN," by charging *him* with the paltriness of imitation? And yet, some snarling critic, who might envy the reputation he had not the genius to secure for himself, might refer to the frequent, very forcible, but rather quaint repetition, in the last two lines of many of the stanzas, as a palpable imitation of the manner of Coleridge, in several stanzas of "The Ancient Mariner." Let me put them together; Mr. Poe says—

> Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore,
> Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore.

And again—

> It shall clasp a sainted maiden, whom the angels name Lenore—
> Clasp a rare and radiant maiden, whom the angels name Lenore.

Mr. Coleridge says (running two lines into one):

> For all averred I had killed the bird, that made the breeze to blow,
> "Ah, wretch!" said they, "the bird to slay, that made the breeze to blow."

And again—

> They all averred I had killed the bird, that brought the fog and mist.
> "'T was right," said they, "such birds to slay, that bring the fog and mist."

I have before me an anonymous poem, which I first saw some five years ago, entitled "The Bird of the Dream." I should like to transcribe the whole—but it is too long. The author was awakened from sleep by the song of a beautiful bird, sitting on the sill of his window—the sweet notes had mingled with his dreams, and brought to his remembrance the sweeter voice of his lost "CLARE." He says :

> And thou wert in my dream—a spirit thou didst seem—
> The spirit of a friend long since departed ;
> Oh ! she was fair and bright, but she left me one dark night—
> She left me all alone, and broken-hearted. * * *
>
> My dream went on, and thou went a warbling too,
> Mingling the harmonies of earth and heaven ;
> Till *away—away—away*—beyond the realms of day—
> My angel CLARE to my embrace was given. * * *
>
> Sweet bird from realms of light, oh ! come again to-night,
> Come to my window—perch upon my chair—
> Come give me back again that deep impassioned strain
> That tells me thou hast seen and loved my CLARE.

Now I shall not charge Mr. Poe with plagiarism—for, as I have said, such charges are perfectly absurd. Ten to one he never saw this before. But let us look at the "*identities*" that may be made out between this and "THE RAVEN." *First*, in each case, the poet is a broken-hearted lover. *Second*, that lover longs for some hereafter communion with the departed. *Third*, there is a bird. *Fourth*, the bird is at the poet's window. *Fifth*, the bird being at the poet's window, makes a noise. *Sixth*, making a noise, attracts the attention of the poet ; who, *seventh*, was half-asleep, dosing, dreaming. *Eighth*, the poet invites the bird to come in. *Ninth*, a confabulation ensues.

Tenth, the bird is supposed to be a visitor from the land of spirits. *Eleventh*, allusion is made to the departed. *Twelfth*, intimation is given that the bird knew something of the departed. *Thirteenth*, that he knew her worth and loveliness. *Fourteenth*, the bird seems willing to linger with the poet. *Fifteenth*, there is a repetition, in the second and fourth lines, of a part, and that the emphatic part, of the first and third. Here is a round baker's-dozen (and two to spare) of *identities*, to offset the dozen found between Aldrich and Hood, and that, too, without a word of *rhythm*, metre, or stanza, which should never form a part of such a comparison. Moreover, this same poem contains an example of that kind of repetition, which I have supposed the critic meant to charge upon Longfellow as one of his imitations—

Away—away—away, etc.

I might pursue it further. But I will not. Such criticisms only make the *author* of them contemptible, without soiling a plume in the cap of his victim. I have selected this poem of Mr. Poe's, for illustrating my remarks, because it is recent, and must be familiar to all the lovers of true poetry hereabouts. It is remarkable for its power, beauty, and originality, (out upon the automaton owl that has presumed to croak out a miserable parody—I commend him to the tender mercies of Haynes Bayley,*) and shows, more forcibly than any which I can think of, the absurdity and shallowness of this kind of criticism. One word more,—though acquainted with Mr. Longfellow, I have never seen Mr. Aldrich, nor do I even know in what part of

* I would be a Parody, written by a ninny,
Not worth a penny, and sold for a guinea, etc.

the country he resides ; and I have no acquaintance with Mr. Poe. I have written what I have written with no personal motives, but simply because, from my earliest reading of reviews and critical notices, I have been disgusted with this wholesale mangling of victims without rhyme or reason. I scarcely remember an instance where the resemblances detected were not exceedingly far-fetched and shadowy, and only perceptible to a mind predisposed to suspicion, and accustomed to splitting hairs. OUTIS.

What I admire in this letter is the gentlemanly grace of its manner, and the chivalry which has prompted its composition. What I do *not* admire is all the rest. In especial, I do not admire the desperation of the effort to make out a case. No gentleman should degrade himself, on any grounds, to the paltryness of *ex-parte* argument; and I shall not insult Outis at the outset, by assuming for a moment that he (Outis) is weak enough to suppose me (Poe) silly enough to look upon all this abominable rigmarole as any thing better than a very respectable specimen of special pleading.

As a general rule in a case of this kind, I should wish to begin with the beginning, but as I have been unable, in running my eye over Outis' remarks, to discover that they have any beginning at all, I shall be pardoned for touching them in the order which suits me best. Outis need not have put himself to the trouble of informing his readers that he has "some acquaintance with Mr. Longfellow." It was needless also to mention that he did not

know *me*. I thank him for his many flatteries—but of their inconsistency I complain. To speak of me in one breath as a poet, and in the next to insinuate charges of "carping littleness," is simply to put forth a flat paradox. When a plagiarism is committed and detected, the word "littleness," and other similar words, are immediately brought into play. To the words themselves I have no objection whatever; but their application might occasionally be improved.

Is it altogether impossible that a critic be instigated to the exposure of a plagiarism or, still better, of plagiarism generally wherever he meets it, by a strictly honorable and even charitable motive? Let us see. A theft of this kind is committed—for the present we will admit the *possibility* that a theft of this character can be committed. The chances of course are, that an established author steals from an unknown one, rather than the converse, for in proportion to the circulation of the original is the risk of the plagiarism's detection. The person about to commit the theft hopes for impunity altogether on the ground of the reconditeness of the source from which he thieves. But this obvious consideration is rarely borne in mind. We read a certain passage in a certain book. We meet a passage nearly similar, in another book. The first book is not at hand, and we cannot compare dates. We decide by what we fancy the probabilities of the case. The one author is a distinguished man—our sympathies are always in favor of distinction. "It is not likely," we say in our

hearts, "that so distinguished a personage as A. would be guilty of plagiarism from this B. of whom nobody in the world has ever heard." We give judgment, therefore, at once against B., of whom nobody in the world has ever heard; and it is for the very reason that nobody in the world *has* ever heard of him, that, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, the judgment so precipitously given is erroneous. Now then the plagiarist has not merely committed a wrong in itself—a wrong whose incomparable meanness would deserve exposure on absolute grounds—but he, the guilty, the successful, the eminent, has fastened the degradation of his crime—the retribution which should have overtaken it in his own person—upon the guiltless, the toiling, the unfriended struggler up the mountainous path of Fame. Is not sympathy for the plagiarist, then, about as sagacious and about as generous as would be sympathy for the murderer whose exultant escape from the noose of the hangman should be the cause of an innocent man's being hung? And because I, for one, should wish to throttle the guilty with the view of letting the innocent go, could it be considered proper on the part of any "acquaintance of Mr. Longfellow's" who came to witness the execution,—could it be thought, I say, either chivalrous or decorous on the part of this "acquaintance" to get up against me a charge of "carping littleness," while we stood amicably together at the foot of the gallows?

In all this I have taken it for granted that such a sin as

plagiarism exists. We are informed by Outis, however, that it does *not*. "I shall not charge Mr. Poe with plagiarism," he says, "for, as I have said, such charges are perfectly absurd." An assertion of this kind is certainly *funny* (I am aware of no other epithet which precisely applies to it); and I have much curiosity to know if Outis is prepared to swear to its truth—holding right aloft his hand, of course, and kissing the back of D'Israeli's "Curiosities," or the "*Mélanges*," of Suard and André. But if the assertion is funny (and it *is*) it is by no means an original thing. It is precisely, in fact, what all the plagiarists and all the "acquaintances" of the plagiarists since the Flood have maintained with a very praiseworthy resolution. The attempt to *prove*, however, by reasoning *a priori*, that plagiarism cannot exist, is too good an idea on the part of Outis not to be a plagiarism in itself. Are we mistaken?—or have we seen the following words before in Joseph Miller, where that ingenious gentleman is bent upon demonstrating that a leg of mutton is and ought to be a turnip?

> A man who aspires to fame, etc., attempts to win his object —how? By stealing, *in open day*, the finest passages, the most beautiful thoughts (no others are worth stealing), and claiming them as his own; and that too when he *knows* that every competitor, etc., will be ready to cry him down as a thief.

Is it possible—is it conceivable that Outis does not here see the begging of the whole question? Why, *of course*, if the theft had to be committed "*in open day*"

it would not be committed; and if the thief "*knew*" that every one would cry him down, he would be too excessive a fool to make even a decent thief if he indulged his thieving propensities in any respect. But he thieves at night—in the dark—and *not* in the open day (if he suspects it), and he does *not* know that he will be detected at all. Of the class of wilful plagiarists nine out of ten are authors of established reputation, who plunder recondite, neglected, or forgotten books.

"I shall not accuse Mr. Poe of plagiarism," says Outis, "for, as I have observed before, such charges are perfectly absurd," and Outis is certainly right in dwelling on the point that he has observed this thing before. It is the one original point of his essay—for I really believe that no one else was ever silly enough to "observe it before."

Here is a gentleman who writes in certain respects as a gentleman should, and who yet has the effrontery to base a defence of a friend from the charge of plagiarism, on the broad ground that no such thing as plagiarism ever existed. I confess that to an assertion of this nature there is no little difficulty in getting up a reply. What in the world can a man say in a case of this kind?—he cannot of course give utterance to the first epithets that spring to his lips—and yet what else shall he utter that shall not have an air of direct insult to the common-sense of mankind? What could any judge on any bench in the country do but laugh or swear at the attorney who should be-

gin his defence of a petty-larceny client with an oration demonstrating *a priori* that no such thing as petty larceny ever had been or, in the nature of things, ever could be committed? And yet the attorney might make as sensible a speech as Outis—even a more sensible one—any thing but a less sensible one. Indeed, *mutato nomine*, he might employ Outis' identical words. He might say—"In view, gentlemen of the jury, of all the glaring improbabilities of such a case, a prosecuting attorney should be very slow to make such a charge. I say glaring improbabilities, for it seems to me that no circumstantial evidence could be sufficient to secure a verdict of theft in such a case. Look *at* it. [Here the judge would look at the maker of the speech.] Look at it. A man who aspires to (the) fame (of being a beau)—who seeks the esteem and praise of all the world (of dandies), and lives upon his reputation (for broadcloth) as his vital element, attempts to win his object—how? By stealing in open day the finest waist-coasts, the most beautiful dress-coats (no others are worth stealing), and the rarest pantaloons of another, and claiming them as his own; and that too when he knows that every competitor for (the) fame (of Brummelism) and every fashion-plate magazine in the world, as well as the real owner, will be ready to identify the borrowed plumes in a moment, and cry him down as a thief. A madman, an idiot, if he were capable of such an achievement, might do it, gentlemen of the jury, but no other."

Now, of course no judge in the world whose sense of

duty was not overruled by a stronger sense of the facetious, would permit the attorney to proceed with any such speech. It would never *do* to have the time of the court occupied by this gentleman's well-meant endeavor to show *a priori* the impossibility of that ever happening which the clerk of this same court could show *a posteriori* had been happening by wholesale ever since there had been such a thing as a foreign count. And yet the speech of the attorney was really a very excellent speech, when we compare it with that of Outis. For the "glaring improbability" of the plagiarism is a mere nothing by the side of the "glaring improbability" of the theft of the sky-blue dress-coat, and the yellow plaid pantaloons; —we may take it for granted, of course, that the thief was one of the upper ten thousand of thieves, and would not have put himself to the trouble of appropriating any garments that were not of indisputable *bon ton*, and patronized even by Professor Longfellow himself. The improbability of the literary theft, I say, is really a mere trifle in comparison with the broadcloth larceny. For the plagiarist is either a man of no note or a man of note. In the first case, he is usually an ignoramus, and getting possession of a rather rare book, plunders it without scruple, on the ground that nobody has ever seen a copy of it except himself. In the second case (which is a more general one by far), he pilfers from some poverty-stricken and therefore neglected man of genius, on the reasonable supposition that this neglected man of genius

will very soon cut his throat, or die of starvation (the sooner the better, no doubt), and that in the meantime he will be too busy in keeping the wolf from the door to look after the purloiners of his property, and too poor, and too cowed, and for these reasons too contemptible, under any circumstances, to dare accuse of so base a thing as theft, the wealthy and triumphant gentleman of elegant leisure who has only done the vagabond too much honor in knocking him down and robbing him upon the highway.

The plagiarist, then, in either case, has very reasonable ground for expecting impunity, and at all events it is because he thinks so that he perpetrates the plagiarism—but how is it with the count who steps into the shop of a tailor, and slips under his cloak the sky-blue dress-coat and the yellow plaid pantaloons? He, the count, would be a greater fool in these matters than a count ever was, if he did not perceive at once that the chances were about nine hundred and ninety-nine to one that he would be caught the next morning before twelve o'clock, in the very first bloom and blush of his promenade down Broadway, by some one of those officious individuals who are continually on the *qui vive* to catch the counts and take away from them their sky-blue coats and yellow plaid pantaloons. Yes, undoubtedly; the count is very well aware of all this; but he takes into consideration that, although the nine hundred and ninety-nine chances *are* certainly against him, the one is just as certainly in his favor—that luck is

every thing—that life is short—that the weather is fine—and that if he can only manage to get safely through his promenade down Broadway in the sky-blue dress-coat and the yellow plaid pantaloons, he will enjoy the high honor, for once in his life, at least, of being mistaken, by fifteen ladies out of twenty, either for Professor Longfellow, or Phœbus Apollo. And this consideration is enough—the half of it would have been more than enough to satisfy the count that, in putting the garments under his cloak, he is doing a very sagacious and very commendable thing. He steals them, then, at once, and without scruple, and, when he is caught arrayed in them the next morning, he is, of course, highly amused to hear his counsel make an oration in court about the "glaring improbability" of his having stolen them when he stole them—by way of showing the abstract impossibility of their ever having been stolen at all.

"What is plagiarism?" demands Outis at the outset, *avec l'air d'un Romain qui sauve sa patrie*—"What is plagiarism, and what constitutes a good ground for the charge?" Of course all men anticipate something unusually happy in the way of reply to queries so cavernously propounded; but if so, then all men have forgotten, or no man has ever known, that Outis is a Yankee. He answers the two questions by two others—and perhaps this is quite as much as any one should expect him to do. "Did no two men," he says, "ever think alike without stealing one from the other; or, thinking alike, did no two men ever

use the same or similar words to convey the thoughts, and that without any communication with each other?—to deny it is absurd." Of course it is—very absurd; and the only thing *more* absurd that I can call to mind at present, is the supposition that any person ever entertained an idea of denying it. But are we to understand the denying it, or the absurdity of denying it, or the absurdity of supposing that any person intended to deny it, as the true answer to the original queries?

But let me aid Outis to a distinct conception of his own irrelevance. I accuse his friend, specifically, of a plagiarism. This accusation Outis rebuts by asking me with a grave face, not whether the friend might not, in this individual case, and in the compass of eight short lines have happened upon ten or twelve peculiar identities of thought and identities of expression with the author from whom I charge him with plagiarizing, but simply whether I do not admit the *possibility* that once in the course of eternity some two individuals might not happen upon a single identity of thought, and give it voice in a single identity of expression.

Now, frankly, I admit the possibility in question, and would request my friends to get ready for me a strait-jacket if I did not. There can be no doubt in the world, for example, that Outis considers me a fool:—the thing is sufficiently plain: and this opinion on the part of Outis is what mankind have agreed to denominate an idea; and this idea is also entertained by Mr. Aldrich, and by

Mr. Longfellow—and by Mrs. Outis and her seven children—and by Mrs. Aldrich and hers—and by Mrs. Longfellow and hers—including the grandchildren and great-grandchildren, if any, who will be instructed to transmit the idea in unadulterated purity down an infinite vista of generations yet to come. And of this idea thus extensively entertained, it would really be a very difficult thing to vary the expression in any material degree. A remarkable similarity would be brought about, indeed, by the desire of the parties in question to put the thought into as compendious a form as possible, by way of bringing it to a focus at once and having done with it upon the spot.

Outis will perceive, therefore, that I have every desire in the world to afford him that "fair play" which he considers "a jewel," since I admit not only the possibility of the class of coincidences for which he contends, but even the impossibility of there not existing just as many of these coincidences as he may consider necessary to make out his case. One of the species he details as follows, at some length:

Some years ago, a letter was written from some part of New England, describing one of those scenes, not very common during what is called "the January thaw," when the snow, mingled with rain, and freezing as it falls, forms a perfect covering of ice upon every object. The storm clears away suddenly, and the moon comes up. The letter proceeds—"*every tree and shrub, as far as the eye can reach, of pure trans-*

parent glass—a perfect garden of moving, waving, breathing crystals. * * * *Every tree is a diamond chandelier, with a whole constellation of stars clustering to every socket,*" etc. This letter was laid away where such things usually are, in a private drawer, and did not see the light for many years. But the very next autumn brought out, among the splendid annuals got up in the country, a beautiful poem from Whittier, describing the same, or rather a similar scene, in which the one

The trees, like crystal chandeliers

was put in italics by every reviewer in the land, for the exceeding beauty of the imagery Now *the letter* was written, probably, about the same time with the *poem*, though the poem was not published till nearly a year after. The writers were not, and never have been, acquainted with each other, and neither could possibly have seen the work of the other before writing. Now, was there any plagiarism here?

After the fashion of Outis himself I shall answer his query by another. What has the question whether the chandelier friend committed a plagiarism, to do with the question whether the death-bed friend committed a plagiarism, or whether it is possible or impossible that plagiarism, generally, can be committed? But, merely for courtesy's sake, I step aside from the exact matter in hand. In the case mentioned I should consider material differences in the terms of description as more remarkable than coincidences. Since the tree *really* looked like a chandelier, the true wonder would have been in likening it to any thing else. Of course, nine commonplace men

out of ten would have maintained it to be a chandelier-looking tree. No *poet* of any pretension, however, would have committed himself so far as to put such a similitude in print. The chandelier might have been poetically likened to the crystallized tree—but the converse is a platitude. The gorgeous unaltered handiwork of Nature is always degraded by comparison with the tawdry gew-gaws of Art—and perhaps the very ugliest thing in the world is a chandelier. If "every reviewer in the land put the passage into italics on account of the exceeding beauty of the imagery," then every printer's devil in the land should have been flogged for not taking it out of Italics upon the spot, and putting it in the plainest Roman—which is too good for it by one half.

I put no faith in the *nil admirari*, and am apt to be amazed at every second thing which I see. One of the most amazing things I have yet seen is the complacency with which Outis throws to the right and left his anonymous assertions, taking it for granted that because he (Nobody) asserts them, I must believe them as a matter of course. However, he is quite in the right. I am perfectly ready to admit any thing that he pleases, and am prepared to put as implicit faith in his *ipse dixit* as the Bishop of Autun did in the Bible—on the ground that he knew nothing about it at all. We will understand it, then, not merely as an anonymous assertion, but as an absolute fact, that the two chandelier authors "were not and never have been acquainted with each other, and

that neither could have seen the work of the other before writing." We will agree to understand all this as indisputable truth, I say, through motives of the purest charity, for the purpose of assisting a friend out of trouble, and without reference to the consideration that no third person short of Signor Blitz or Professor Rogers could in any conceivable manner have satisfied himself of the truth of the twentieth part of it. Admitting this and every thing else to be as true as the Pentateuch, it follows that plagiarism in the case in question was a thing that could not by any possibility be—and do I rightly comprehend Outis as demonstrating the impossibility of plagiarism where it *is* possible, by adducing instances of inevitable similarity under circumstances where it *is not?* The fact is, that through want of space and time to follow Outis through the labyrinth of impertinences in which he is scrambling about, I am constrained much against my sense of decorum to place him in the high-road of his argument, so that he may see where he is, and what he is doing, and what it is that he is endeavoring to demonstrate.

He wishes to show, then, that Mr. Longfellow is innocent of the imitation with which I have charged him, and that Mr. Aldrich is innocent of the plagiarism with which I have *not* charged him ; and this duplicate innocence is expected to be proved by showing the possibility that a certain, or that any uncertain series of coincidences may be the result of pure accident. Now of course I cannot

be sure that Outis will regard my admission as a service or a disservice, but I admit the possibility at once; and not only this, but I would admit it as a possibility were the coincidences a billion, and each of the most definitive peculiarity that human ingenuity could conceive. But in admitting this I admit just nothing at all, so far as the advancement of Outis' proper argument is concerned. The affair is one of *probabilities* altogether, and can be satisfactorily settled only by reference to their Calculus.

"Pray," inquires Outis of Mr. Willis, "did you ever think the worse of Dana because your friend John Neal charged him with pirating upon Paul Allen, and Bryant, too, in his poem of 'The Dying Raven'?" I am sincerely disposed to give Outis his due, and will not pretend to deny his happy facility in asking irrelevant questions. In the present case we can only imagine Mr. Willis' reply:— "My dear sir," he might say, "I certainly do not think much the worse of Mr. Dana because Mr. Neal *charged* him with the piracy, but be so kind as not to inquire what might have been my opinion had there been any substantiation of the charge." I quote Outis' inquiry, however, not so much to insist upon its singular luminousness, as to call attention to the argument embodied in the capital letters of "THE DYING RAVEN."

Now, were I, in any spasm of perversity, to direct Outis' catechetical artillery against himself, and demand of him explicitly *his reasons* for causing those three words to be printed in capitals, what in the world would he do for a

reply? As a matter of course, for some moments, he would be profoundly embarrassed—but, being a true man, and a chivalrous one, as all defenders of Mr. Longfellow must be, he could not fail, in the end, to admit that they were so printed for the purpose of safely insinuating a charge which not even an Outis had the impudence openly to utter. Let us imagine his thoughts while carefully twice underscoring the words. Is it impossible that they ran thus?—"I am perfectly well aware, to be sure, that the only conceivable resemblance between Mr. Bryant's poem and Mr. Poe's poem lies in their common reference to a raven ; but then, what I am writing will be seen by some who have not read Mr. Bryant's poem, and by many who have never heard of Mr. Poe's, and among these classes I shall be able to do Mr. Poe a serious injustice and injury, by conveying the idea that there is really sufficient similarity to warrant that charge of plagiarism, which I, Outis, the 'acquaintance of Mr. Longfellow,' am too high-minded and too merciful to prefer."

Now, I do not pretend to be positive that any such thoughts as these ever entered the brain of Outis. Nor will I venture to designate the whole insinuation as a specimen of "carping littleness, too paltry for any man who values his reputation as a gentleman" : for, in the first place, the whole matter, as I have put it, is purely supposititious ; and, in the second, I should furnish ground for a new insinuation of the same character, inasmuch as I should be employing Outis' identical words. The fact

is, Outis has happened upon the idea that the most direct method of rebutting one accusation is to get up another. By showing that *I* have committed a sin, he proposes to show that Mr. Aldrich and Mr. Longfellow have *not*. Leaving the underscored "DYING RAVEN" to argue its own case, he proceeds, therefore, as follows:—

Who, for example, would wish to be guilty of the littleness of detracting from the uncommon merit of that remarkable poem of this same Mr. Poe's, recently published in the *Mirror*, from the *American Review*, entitled "THE RAVEN," by charging *him* with the paltriness of imitation? And yet, some snarling critic, who might envy the reputation he had not the genius to secure for himself, might refer to the frequent, very forcible, but rather quaint repetition, in the last two lines of many of the stanzas, as a palpable imitation of the manner of Coleridge, in several stanzas of "The Ancient Mariner." Let me put them together. Mr. Poe says—

> Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore,
> Let my heart be still a moment, and this mystery explore.

And again—

> It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
> Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore.

Mr. Coleridge says (running two lines into one):

For all averred I had killed the bird, that made the breeze to blow,
"Ah, wretch!" said they, "the bird to slay, that made the breeze to blow."

And again—

They all averred I had killed the bird, that brought the fog and mist,
"'T was right," said they, "such birds to slay, that bring the fog and mist."

The "rather quaint" is ingenious. Fully one third of whatever effect "The Raven" has, is wrought by the quaintness in question—a point elaborately introduced, to accomplish a well-considered purpose. What idea would Outis entertain of me, were I to speak of his defence of his friends as very decent, very respectable, but rather meritorious? In the passages collated, there are two points upon which the "snarling critic" might base his insinuation—if ever so weak a "snarling critic" existed. Of these two points one is purely hypothetical—that is to say, it is disingenuously manufactured by Mr. Longfellow's acquaintance to suit his own purposes—or perhaps the purposes of the imaginary snarling critic. The argument of the second point is demolished by my not only admitting it, but insisting upon it. Perhaps the least tedious mode of refuting Outis, is to acknowledge nine tenths of every thing he may think proper to say.

But, in the present instance, what am I called upon to acknowledge? I am charged with imitating the repetition of phrase in the two concluding lines of a stanza, and of imitating this from Coleridge. But why not extend the accusation, and insinuate that I imitate it from everybody else? for certainly there is no poet living or dead who has not put in practice the identical effect—the well-understood effect of the *refrain*. Is Outis' argument to the end that *I* have no right to this thing for the reason that all the world has? If this is *not* his argument, will he be kind enough to inform me (at his leisure) what it *is?*

Or is he prepared to confess himself so absurdly uninformed as not to know that whatever a poet claims on the score of original versification, is claimed not on account of any individual rhythmical or metrical effects, (for *none* are individually original,) but solely on account of the novelty of his *combinations* of old effects? The hypothesis, or manufacture, consists in the alteration of Coleridge's metre, with the view of forcing it into a merely ocular similarity with my own, and thus of imposing upon some one or two grossly ignorant readers. I give the verses of Coleridge as they *are:*

> For all averred, I had killed the bird,
> That made the breeze to blow;
> "Ah, wretch," said they, "the bird to slay,
> That made the breeze to blow.

The verses beginning, "*They* all averred," etc., are arranged in the same manner. Now I have taken it for granted that it is Outis' design to impose the idea of similarity between my lines and those of Coleridge, upon some one or two grossly ignorant individuals: at the same time, whoever attempts such an imposition is rendered liable at least to the suspicion of very gross ignorance himself. The ignorance or the knavery are the two uncomfortable horns of his dilemma.

Let us see. Coleridge's lines are arranged in quatrains —mine in couplets. His first and third lines rhyme at the close of the second and fourth feet—mine flow continuously, without rhyme. His metre, briefly defined, is

alternately tetrameter acatalectic and trimeter acatalectic —mine is uniformly octameter catalectic. It might be expected, however, that at least the *rhythm* would prove to be identical—but not so. Coleridge's is iambic (varied in the third foot of the first line with an anapæst)—mine is the exact converse, trochaic. The fact is, that neither in rhythm, metre, stanza, or rhyme, is there even a *single* point of *approximation* throughout; the *only* similarity being the wickedly or sillily manufactured one of Outis himself, appealing from the ears to the eyes of the most uncultivated classes of the rabble. The ingenuity and validity of the manufacture might be approached, although certainly not paralleled, by an attempt to show that blue and yellow pigments, standing unmixed at separate ends of a studio, were equivalent to green. I say "not paralleled," for even the *mixing* of the pigments, in the case of Outis, would be very far, as I have shown, from producing the supposititious effect. Coleridge's lines, written together, would result in rhymed iambic heptameter acatalectic, while mine are unrhymed trochaic octameter catalectic—differing in every conceivable circumstance. A closer parallel than the one I have imagined, would be the demonstration that two are equal to four, on the ground that, possessing two dollars, a man will have four when he gets an additional couple—for that the additional couple is *somewhere*, no one, after due consideration, will deny.

If Outis will now take a seat upon one of the horns of

his dilemma, I will proceed to the third variation of the charges *insinuated* through the medium of the "snarling critic," in the passage heretofore quoted.*

The first point to be attended to is the "ten to one that I never saw it before." Ten to one that I never did—but Outis might have remembered that twenty to one I should *like* to see it. In accusing either Mr. Aldrich or Mr. Hood, I printed their poems together and in full. But an *anonymous* gentleman rebuts my accusation by telling me that there is a certain similarity between a poem of my own and an *anonymous* poem which he has before *him*, and which he would like to transcribe if it were not too long. He contents himself, therefore, with giving me from this too long poem, three stanzas which are shown, by a series of intervening asterisks, to have been *culled*, to suit his own purposes, from different portions of the poem, but which (again to suit his own purposes) he places before the public in consecutive connection! The least that can be said of the whole statement is that it is deliciously frank—but, upon the whole, the poem will look quite as well before *me*, as before Outis, whose time is too much occupied to transcribe it. I, on the other hand, am entirely at leisure, and will transcribe and *print* the whole of it with the greatest pleasure in the world—provided always that it is not too long to refer to—too long to have its whereabouts pointed out—as I half suspect, from Outis' silence on the subject, that *it is*. One thing I will

* "I have before me," to "part of such comparison," *ante*, p. 12.

take it upon myself to say, in the spirit of prophecy:—whether the poem in question is or is not in existence (and we have only Nobody's word that it is), the passages *as quoted*, are not in existence, except as quoted by Outis, who, in some particulars, I maintain, has falsified the text, for the purpose of *forcing* a similarity, as in the case of the verses of Coleridge. All this I assert in the spirit of prophecy, while we await the forthcoming of the poem. In the meantime, we will estimate the "identities" with reference to "The Raven" as collated with the passages culled by Outis—granting him every thing he is weak enough to imagine I am in duty bound to grant—admitting that the poem as a whole exists—that the words and lines are ingeniously written—that the stanzas have the connection and sequence he gives them—and that although he has been already found guilty of chicanery in one instance, he is at least entirely innocent in this.

He has established, he says, fifteen identities, "and that, too, without a word of rhythm, metre, or stanza, which should never form a part of such comparison"—by which, of course, we are to understand that *with* the rhythm, metre, and stanza (omitted only because they should never form a part of such comparison) he would have succeeded in establishing eighteen. Now I insist that rhythm, metre, and stanza, *should* form and *must* form a part of the comparison, and I will presently demonstrate what I say. I also insist, therefore, since he *could* find me guilty if he *would* upon these points, that guilty he *must*

and *shall* find me upon the spot. He then, distinctly, has established eighteen identities—and I proceed to examine them one by one.

"*First*," he says, "in each case the poet is a broken-hearted lover." Not so; *my* poet has no indication of a broken heart. On the contrary, he lives triumphantly in the expectation of meeting his Lenore in Aidenn, and is so indignant with the raven for maintaining that the meeting will never take place, as to call him a liar, and order him out of the house. Not only is my lover not a broken-hearted one, but I have been at some pains to show that broken hearts and matters of that kind are improperly made the subject of poems. I refer to a chapter of the articles entitled "Marginalia." "*Second*," says Outis, "that lover longs for some hereafter communion with the bird." In my poem there is no expression of any such longing; the nearest approach to it is the triumphant consciousness which forms the thesis and staple of the whole. In Outis' poem the nearest approach to the "longing" is contained in the lover's request to the bird to repeat a strain that assures him (the lover) that it (the bird) has known the lost mistress. "*Third*, there is a bird," says Outis. So there is. Mine, however, is a raven, and we may take it for granted that Outis' is either a nightingale or a cockatoo. "*Fourth*, the bird is at the poet's window." As regards my poem, true; as regards Outis', not; the poet only *requests* the bird to come to the window. "*Fifth*, the bird being at the

poet's window, makes a noise." The fourth specification failing, the fifth, which depends upon it, as a matter of course fails too. "*Sixth*, making a noise attracts the attention of the poet." The fifth specification failing, the sixth, which depends upon it, fails, likewise, and as a matter of course, as before. "*Seventh*, [the poet] was half-asleep, dozing, dreaming." False altogether; only *my* poet was "napping," and this in the commencement of the poem, which is occupied with realities and waking action. Outis' poet is fast asleep and dreams every thing. "*Eighth*, the poet invites the bird to come in." Another palpable failure. Outis' poet indeed asked his bird in; but my raven walked in without any invitation. "*Ninth*, a confabulation ensues." As regards my poem, true; but there is not a word of any confabulation in Outis'. "*Tenth*, the bird is supposed to be a visitor from the land of spirits." As regards Outis' poem, this is true only if we give a wide interpretation to the phrase "realms of light." In my poem the bird is not only not from the world of spirits, but I have specifically conveyed the idea of his having escaped from "some unhappy master," of whom he had caught the word "nevermore"; in the concluding stanza, it is true, I suddenly convert him into an allegorical emblem or personification of Mournful Remembrance, out of the shadow of which the poet is "lifted nevermore." "*Eleventh*, allusion is made to the departed." Admitted. "*Twelfth*, intimation is given that the bird knew something of the departed." True as

regards Outis' poem only. No such intimation is given in mine. "*Thirteenth*, that he knew her worth and loveliness." Again, true only as regards Outis' poem. It should be observed here that I have disproved the twelfth and thirteenth specifications purely for form's sake; they are nothing more than disingenuous repetitions of the eleventh. The "allusion to the departed" *is* the "intimation," and the intimation *is* that "he knew her worth and loveliness." "*Fourteenth*, the bird seems willing to linger with the poet." True only as regards my poem; in Outis' (as quoted) there is nothing of the kind. "*Fifteenth*, there is a repetition, in the second and fourth lines, of a part, and that the emphatic part, of the first and third." What is here asserted is true only of the first stanza quoted by Outis, and of the commencement of the third. There is nothing of it in the second. In my poem there is nothing of it at all, with the exception of the repetition in the refrain, occurring at the *fifth* line of my stanza of six. I quote a stanza—by way of rendering every thing perfectly intelligible, and affording Outis his much coveted "fair play":

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting—
"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"
Quoth the raven "Nevermore."

Sixteenth, concerns the rhythm. Outis' is iambic; mine the exact converse, trochaic. *Seventeenth*, regards the

metre. Outis' is hexameter, alternating with pentameter, both acatalectic.* Mine is octameter acatalectic, alternating with heptameter catalectic repeated in the refrain of the fifth verse, and terminating with tetrameter catalectic. *Eighteenth*, and last, has respect to the stanza—that is to say, to the general arrangement of the metre into masses. Of Outis' I need only say that it is a very common and certainly a very stupid one. My own has at least the merit of *being* my own. No writer, living or dead, has ever employed any thing resembling it. The innumerable specific differences between it and that of Outis' it would be a tedious matter to point out—but a far less difficult matter than to designate one individual point of similarity.

And now what are we to think of the eighteen identities of Outis—the fifteen that he establishes and the three that he could establish if he would—that is to say, if he could only bring himself to be so unmerciful? Of the whole eighteen, sixteen have shown themselves to be lamentable failures—having no more substantial basis than sheer misrepresentation, "too paltry for any man who values his reputation as a gentleman and a scholar,"

* This is as accurate a description as can be given of the alternating (of the second and fourth) lines in a few words. The fact is, they are indescribable without more trouble than they are worth—and seem to me either to have been written by some one ignorant of the principles of verse, or to be misquoted. The line, however,

That tells me thou hast seen and loved my Clare,

answers the description I have given of the alternating verses, and was, no doubt, the general *intention* for all of them.

and depending altogether for effect upon the *chances* that nobody would take the trouble to investigate their falsehood or their truth. Two—the third and the eleventh —are sustained ; and these two show that in both poems there is "an allusion to the departed," and that in both poems there is "a bird." The first idea that suggests itself, at this point, is, whether *not* to have a bird and *not* to have an allusion to a deceased mistress, would not be the truer features of distinctiveness after all—whether two poems which have *not* these items might not be more rationally charged with similarity than any two poems which *have*. But having thus disproved *all* the identities of Outis (for any one comprehending the principle of proof in such cases will admit that two *only*, are in effect just nothing at all), I am quite ready, by way again of affording him "fair play," to expunge every thing that has been said on the subject, and proceed as if every one of these eighteen identities were in the first bloom and deepest blush of a demonstration.

I might grant them as demonstrated, to be sure, on the ground which I have already touched—that to prove me or anybody else an imitator, is no mode of showing that Mr. Aldrich or Mr. Longfellow is *not*. But I might safely admit them on another and equally substantial consideration, which seems to have been overlooked by the zeal of Outis altogether. He has clearly forgotten that the *mere* number of such coincidences proves nothing, because at any moment we can oblige it to prove

too much. It is the easiest thing imaginable to suggest —and even to do that which Outis has failed in doing; to demonstrate—a practically infinite series of identities between any two compositions in the world, but it by no means follows that all compositions in the world have a *similarity* one with the other, in any comprehensible sense of the term. I mean to say that regard must be had not *only* to the number of the coincidences, but to the peculiarity of each—this peculiarity growing less and less necessary, and the effect of number more and more important, in a ratio prodigiously accumulative, as the investigation progresses. And again, regard must be had not only to the number *and* peculiarity of the coincidences, but to the antagonistic differences, if any, which surround them—and very especially to *the space* over which the coincidences are spread, and the number or paucity of the events, or incidents, from among which the coincidences are selected. When Outis, for example, picks out his eighteen coincidences (which I am now granting as sustained) from a poem so long as "The Raven," in collation with a poem not forthcoming, and which may, therefore, for any thing anybody knows to the contrary, be as long as an infinite flock of ravens, he is merely putting himself to unnecessary trouble in getting together phantoms of arguments that can have no substance wherewith to aid his demonstration, until the ascertained extent of the unknown poem from which they are culled affords them a purpose and a palpability. Can

any man doubt that between "The Iliad" and the "Paradise Lost" there might be established even a thousand very idiosyncratic identities?—and yet is any man fool enough to maintain that "The Iliad" is the only original of the "Paradise Lost"?

But how is it in the case of Messieurs Aldrich and Hood? The poems here are both remarkably brief—and as I have every intention to do justice, and no other intention in the world, I shall be pardoned for again directing attention to them.

Let it be understood that I am entirely uninformed as to which of these two poems was first published. And so little has the question of priority to do with my thesis, that I shall not put myself to the trouble of inquiring. What I maintain is, that there are sufficient grounds for belief that one is plagiarized from the other:—*who* is the original, and *who* is the plagiarist, are points I leave to be settled by any one who thinks the matter of sufficient consequence to give it his attention. But the man who shall deny the plagiarism abstractly—what is it that he calls upon us to believe? *First*, that two poets, in remote parts of the world, conceived the idea of composing a poem on the subject of *Death*. Of course, there is nothing remarkable in this. Death is a naturally poetic theme, and suggests itself by a seeming spontaneity to every poet in the world. But had the subject chosen by the two widely separated poets been even strikingly peculiar—had it been, for example, *a porcupine*, *a piece of*

ginger-bread, or any thing unlikely to be made the subject of a poem, still no sensible person would have insisted upon the single coincidence as any thing *beyond* a single coincidence. We have no difficulty, therefore, in believing what, so far, we are called upon to believe. *Secondly*, we must credit that the two poets concluded to write not only on death, but on the death of a *woman*. Here the mind, observing the two identities, reverts to their peculiarity or non-peculiarity, and finding *no* peculiarity—admitting that the death of a woman is a naturally suggested poetic subject—has no difficulty also in admitting the two coincidences—as such, and nothing beyond. *Thirdly*, we are called upon to believe that the two poets not only concluded to write upon death, and upon the death of a woman, but that, from the innumerable phases of death, the phase of *tranquillity* was happened upon by each. Here the intellect commences a slight rebellion, but it is quieted by the admission, partly, of the spontaneity with which such an idea might arise, and partly of the *possibility* of the coincidences, independently of the consideration of spontaneity. *Fourthly*, we are required to believe that the two poets happened not only upon death—the death of a woman—and the tranquil death of a woman—but upon the idea of representing this woman as lying tranquilly *throughout the whole night*, in spite of the infinity of different durations which might have been imagined for her trance of tranquillity. At this point the reason perceives the evidence against these coincidences (as

such and nothing more) to be increasing in geometrical ratio. It discards all idea of spontaneity, and if it yield credence at all, yields it altogether on the ground of the indisputable *possibility*. *Fifthly*, we are requested to believe that our poets happened not only upon *death*—upon the death of a *woman*—upon the *tranquil* death of a woman—and upon the lying of this woman tranquilly *throughout the night*—but, also, upon the idea of selecting, from the innumerable phases which characterize a tranquil death-bed, the identical one of soft *breathing*—employing also the identical word. Here the reason gives up the endeavor to believe that one poem has not been suggested by the other;—if it be a reason accustomed to deal with the mathematical Calculus of Probabilities, it has abandoned this endeavor at the preceding stage of the investigation. The evidence of suggestion has now become prodigiously accumulate. Each succeeding coincidence (however slight) is proof not merely added, but multiplied by hundreds of thousands. *Sixthly*, we are called upon to believe, not only that the two poets happened upon all this, together with the idea of the soft breathing, but also of employing the identical word *breathing*, in the same line with the identical word *night*. This proposition the reason receives with a smile. *Seventhly*, however, we are required to admit, not only all that has already been found inadmissible, but in addition, that the two poets conceived the idea of representing the death of a woman as occurring precisely at the same

instant, out of all the infinite instants of all time. This proposition the reason receives only with a sneer. *Eighthly*, we are called upon to acquiesce in the assertion that not only all these improbabilities are probable, but that in addition again, the two poets happened upon the idea of representing the woman as stepping immediately into Paradise; and, *ninthly*, that both should not only happen upon all this, but upon the idea of writing a peculiarly brief poem, on so admirably suggestive a thesis; and, *tenthly*, that out of the various rhythms, that is to say, variations of poetic feet, they should have both happened upon the iambus; and *eleventhly*, that out of the absolutely infinite metres that may be contrived from this rhythm, they should both have hit upon the tetrameter acatalectic for the first and third lines of a stanza; and, *twelfthly*, upon the trimeter acatalectic for the second and fourth; and, *thirteenthly*, upon an absolute identity of phrase at, *fourteenthly*, an absolutely identical position, viz.: upon the phrases, "But when the morn," etc., and, "But when the sun," etc., occurring in the beginning of the first line in the last stanza of each poem; and, *fifteenthly* and lastly, that of the vast multitude of appropriate *titles*, they should both have happened upon one whose identity is interfered with at all, only by the difference between the definite and the indefinite article.

Now the chances that these fifteen coincidences, so peculiar in character, and all occurring within the compass

of eight short lines, on the one part, and sixteen on the other—the chances, I say, that these coincidences are merely accidental, may be estimated, possibly, as about one to one hundred millions; and any man who reasons at all, is of course grossly insulted in being called upon to credit them as accidental.

"I have written what I have written," says Outis, "from no personal motives, but simply because, from my earliest reading of reviews and critical notices, I have been disgusted with this wholesale mangling of victims without rhyme or reason." I have already agreed to believe implicitly every thing asserted by the anonymous Outis, and am fully prepared to admit, even, his own contradiction, in one sentence, of what he has insisted upon in the sentence preceding. I shall assume it is indisputable, then (since Nobody says it), that first, he has no acquaintance with myself and "some acquaintance with Mr. Longfellow," and secondly, that he has "written what he has written from no personal motives whatever." That he has been disgusted with "the mangling of victims without rhyme or reason," is, to be sure, a little unaccountable, for the victims without rhyme or reason are precisely the victims that ought to be mangled; but that he has been disgusted "from his earliest reading" with critical notices and reviews, is credible enough if we but imagine his "earliest reading" and earliest writing to have taken place about the same epoch of time.

But to be serious; if Outis has his own private reasons

for being disgusted with what he terms the "wholesale mangling of victims without rhyme or reason," there is not a man living, of common sense and common honesty, who has not better reason (if possible) to be disgusted with the insufferable cant and shameless misrepresentation practised habitually by just such persons as Outis, with the view of decrying by sheer strength of lungs—of trampling down—of rioting down—of mobbing down any man with a soul that bids him come out from among the general corruption of our public press, and take his stand upon the open ground of rectitude and honor. The Outises who practise this species of bullyism are, as a matter of course, anonymous. They are either the "victims without rhyme or reason who have been mangled by wholesale," or they are the relatives, or the relatives *of* the relatives of the "victims without rhyme or reason who have been mangled by wholesale." Their watchwords are "carping littleness," "envious malignity," and "personal abuse." Their low artifices are insinuated calumnies, and indefatigable whispers of regret, from post to pillar, that "Mr. So-and-So, or Mr. This-and-That *will* persist in rendering himself so dreadfully unpopular"; no one, in the meantime, being more thoroughly and painfully aware than these very Outises, that the unpopularity of the just critic who reasons his way, guiltless of dogmatism, is confined altogether within the limits of the influence of the victims without rhyme and reason who have been mangled by wholesale. Even the manifest in-

justice of a Gifford is, I grieve to say, an exceedingly popular thing; and there is *no* literary element of popularity more absolutely and more universally effective than the pungent impartiality of a Wilson or a Macaulay. In regard to my own course—without daring to arrogate to myself a single other quality of either of these eminent men than that pure contempt for mere prejudice and conventionality which actuated them all, I will now unscrupulously call the attention of the Outises to the fact, that it was during what they (the Outises) would insinuate to be the unpopularity of my "wholesale mangling of the victims without rhyme and reason" that, in one year, the circulation of the *Southern Messenger* (a five-dollar journal) extended itself from seven hundred to nearly five thousand; and that, in little more than twice the same time, *Graham's Magazine* swelled its list from five thousand to fifty-two thousand subscribers.

I make no apology for these egotisms, and I proceed with them without hesitation—for, in myself, I am but defending a set of principles which no honest man need be ashamed of defending, and for whose defence no honest man will consider an apology required. The usual watchwords of the Outises, when repelling a criticism; their customary charges, overt or insinuated, are (as I have already said) those of "personal abuse" and "wholesale (or indiscriminate) mangling." In the present instance the latter solely is employed—for not even an Outis can accuse me, with even a decent show of veri-

similitude, of having ever descended, in the most condemnatory of my reviews, to that personal abuse which, upon one or two occasions, has indeed been levelled at myself, in the spasmodic endeavors of aggrieved authors to rebut what I have ventured to demonstrate. I have, then, to refute only the accusation of mangling by wholesale—and I refute it by the simplest reference to *fact*. What I have written remains; and is readily accessible in any of our public libraries. I have had one or two impotent enemies, and a multitude of cherished friends, and both friends and enemies have been, for the most part, literary people; yet no man can point to a single *critique*, among the very numerous ones which I have written during the last ten years, which is either wholly fault-finding or wholly in approbation; nor is there an instance to be discovered, among all that I have published, of my having set forth, either in praise or censure, a single opinion upon any critical topic of moment, without attempting, at least, to give it authority by something that wore the semblance of a reason. Now, is there a writer in the land who, having dealt in criticism even one fourth as much as myself, can of his own criticisms conscientiously say the same? The fact is, that very many of the most eminent men of America, whom I am proud to number among the sincerest of my friends, have been rendered so solely by their approbation of my comments upon their own works—comments in great measure directed *against* themselves as authors—belonging altogether to that very

class of criticism which it is the petty policy of the Outises to cry down, with their diminutive voices, as offensive on the score of wholesale vituperation and personal abuse. If, to be brief, in what I have put forth there has been a preponderance of censure over commendation, is there not to be imagined for this preponderance a more charitable motive than any which the Outises have been magnanimous enough to assign me,—is not this preponderance, in a word, the natural and inevitable tendency of all criticism worth the name in this age of so universal an authorship, that no man in his senses will pretend to deny the vast predominance of good writers over bad?

And now [says Outis] for the matter of Longfellow's imitations—in what do they consist? The critic is not very specific in this charge. Of what kind are they? Are they imitations of thought? Why not call them plagiarisms, then, and show them up? Or are they only verbal imitations of style? Perhaps *this* is one of them, in his poem on the "Sea Weed":

> —— *drifting, drifting, drifting,*
> On the shifting
> Currents of the restless main;

resembling, in form and collocation only, a line in a beautiful and very powerful poem of Mr. Edgar A. Poe. (Write it rather Edgar, a *Poet*, and then it is right to a T.) I have not the poem before me, and have forgotten its title. But he is describing a magnificent intellect in ruins, if I remember rightly, and, speaking of the eloquence of its better days, represents it as

—— *flowing, flowing, flowing,*
Like a river.

Is this what the critic means? Is it *such* imitations as this that he alludes to? If not, I am at fault, either in my reading of Longfellow, or in my general familiarity with the American poets. If this *be* the kind of imitation referred to, permit me to say, the charge is too paltry for any man who valued his reputation as a gentleman or a scholar.

Elsewhere he says:

Moreover, this poem contains an example of that kind of repetition which I have supposed the critic meant to charge upon Longfellow as one of his imitations—

Away—away—away—etc.

I might pursue it farther, but I will not. Such criticisms only make the author of them contemptible, without soiling a plume in the cap of his victim.

The first point to be here observed is the complacency with which Outis *supposes* me to make a certain charge and then vituperates me for his own absurd supposition. Were I, or any man, to accuse Mr. Longfellow of imitation on the score of thrice employing a word in consecutive connection, then I (or any man) would only be guilty of as great a sotticism as was Outis in accusing *me* of imitation on the score of the *refrain*. The repetition in question is assuredly not claimed by myself as original—I should therefore be wary how I charged Mr. Longfellow with imitating it from myself. It is, in fact, a musical

effect which is the common property of all mankind, and has been their common property for ages. Nevertheless, the quotation of this

—— *drifting, drifting, drifting,*

is, on the part of Outis, a little unfortunate. Most certainly the supposed imitation had never been observed by me; nor even had I observed it, should I have considered it *individually*, as a point of any moment;—but all will admit, (since Outis himself has noticed the parallel,) that, were a second parallel of any obviousness to be established from the same brief poem, the "Sea Weed," this second would come in very strong corroboration of the first. Now the sixth stanza of this very "Sea Weed" (which was first published in *Graham's Magazine* for January, 1845) commences with

From the far-off isles enchanted;

and in a little poem of my own, addressed "To Mary," and first published at page 636 of the first volume of the *Southern Literary Messenger*, will be found the lines:

> And thus thy memory is to me
> *Like some enchanted far-off isle*
> In some tumultuous sea.

But to show, in general, what I mean by accusing Mr. Longfellow of imitation, I collate his "Midnight Mass for the Dying Year," with "The Death of the Old Year" of Tennyson.

MIDNIGHT MASS FOR THE DYING YEAR.

Yes, the Year is growing old,
And his eye is pale and bleared;
Death, with frosty hand and cold,
Plucks the old man by the beard,
Sorely,—sorely!

The leaves are falling, falling,
Solemnly and slow;
Caw, caw, the rooks are calling;
It is a sound of woe,
A sound of woe!

Through woods and mountain passes
The winds, like anthems, roll;
They are chanting solemn masses,
Singing, Pray for this poor soul,
Pray,—pray!

And the hooded clouds, like friars,
Tell their beads in drops of rain,
And patter their doleful prayers;
But their prayers are all in vain,
All in vain!

There he stands in the foul weather,
The foolish, fond Old Year,
Crowned with wild flowers and with heather
Like weak, despised Lear,
A king,—a king!

Then comes the summer-like day,
Bids the old man rejoice!
His joy! his last! Oh, the old man gray,
Loveth her ever soft voice
Gentle and low!

To the crimson woods he saith—
To the voice gentle and low,
Of the soft air like a daughter's breath,
Pray do not mock me so!
Do not laugh at me!

And now the sweet day is dead;
Cold in his arms it lies;
No stain from its breath is spread
Over the glassy skies,
No mist nor stain!

Then, too, the Old Year dieth,
And the forests utter a moan,
Like the voice of one who crieth
In the wilderness alone,
Vex not his ghost!

Then comes with an awful roar,
Gathering and sounding on,
The storm-wind from Labrador,
The wind Euroclydon,
The storm-wind!

Howl! howl! and from the forest
Sweep the red leaves away!
Would, the sins that thou abhorrest,
O soul! could thus decay,
And be swept away!

For there shall come a mightier blast,
There shall be a darker day;
And the stars from heaven down-cast,
Like red leaves be swept away!
Kyrie Eleyson!
Christie Eleyson!

THE DEATH OF THE OLD YEAR.

Full knee-deep lies the winter snow,
And the winter winds are wearily sighing
Toll ye the church-bell sad and low.
And tread softly, and speak low,
For the Old Year lies a-dying.
Old Year, you must not die,
You came to us so readily,
You lived with us so steadily,
Old Year, you shall not die.

He lieth still ; he doth not move ;
He will not see the dawn of day ;
He hath no other life above—
He gave me a friend, and a true, true love,
And the New Year will take 'em away.
Old Year, you must not go,
So long as you have been with us,
Such joy as you have seen with us,
Old Year, you shall not go.

He frothed his bumpers to the brim ;
A jollier year we shall not see ;
But though his eyes are waxing dim.
And though his foes speak ill of him,
He was a friend to me.
Old Year, you shall not die ;
We did so laugh and cry with you,
I 've half a mind to die with you,
Old Year, if you must die.

He was full of joke and jest,
But all his merry quips are o'er ;
To see him die, across the waste
His son and heir doth ride post-haste,
But he 'll be dead before.
Every one for his own ;
The night is starry and cold, my friend,
And the New Year, blithe and bold, my friend,
Comes up to take his own.

How hard he breathes ! Over the snow
I heard just now the crowing cock.
The shadows flicker to and fro :
The cricket chirps ; the light burns low ;
'T is nearly one o'clock.
Shake hands before you die ;
Old Year, we 'll dearly rue for you,
What is it we can do for you ?
Speak out before you die.

His face is growing sharp and thin—
Alack ! our friend is gone !

Close up his eyes ; tie up his chin !
Step from the corpse and let him in
That standeth there alone,
And waiteth at the door.
There 's a new foot on the floor, my friend,
And a new face at the door, my friend,
A new face at the door.

I have no idea of commenting, at any length, upon this imitation, which is too palpable to be mistaken, and which belongs to the most barbarous class of literary piracy: that class in which, while the words of the wronged author are avoided, his most intangible, and therefore his least defensible and least reclaimable, property is appropriated. Here, with the exception of lapses which, however, speak volumes (such for instance as the use of the capitalized "Old Year," the general peculiarity of the rhythm, and the absence of rhyme at the end of each stanza), there is nothing of a visible or palpable nature by which the source of the American poem can be established. But then nearly all that is valuable in the piece of Tennyson, is the first conception of personifying the Old Year as a dying old man, with the singularly wild and fantastic *manner* in which that conception is carried out. Of this conception and of this manner he is robbed. What is here not taken from Tennyson is made up, mosaically, from the death scene of Cordelia, in "Lear"—to which I refer the curious reader.

In *Graham's Magazine* for February, 1843, there appeared a poem, furnished by Professor Longfellow, entitled "The Good George Campbell," and purporting to be a

translation from the German of O. L. B. Wolff. In "Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern," by William Motherwell, published by John Wylie, Glasgow, 1827, is to be found a poem partly compiled and partly written by Motherwell himself. It is entitled "The Bonnie George Campbell." I give the two side by side:

MOTHERWELL.	LONGFELLOW.
Hie upon Hielands And low upon Tay, Bonnie George Campbell Rade out on a day. Saddled and bridled And gallant rade he; Hame cam his gude horse, But never cam he.	High on the Highlands, And deep in the day, The good George Campbell Rode free and away. All saddled, all bridled, Gay garments he wore; Home came his gude steed, But he nevermore!
Out cam his auld mither Greeting fu' sair, And out cam his bonnie bride Rivin' her hair. Saddled and bridled And booted rade he; Toom hame cam the saddle, But never cam he.	Out came his mother, Weeping so sadly; Out came his beauteous bride Weeping so madly. All saddled, all bridled, Strong armor he wore; Home came the saddle, But he nevermore!
"My meadow lies green, And my corn is unshorn; My barn is too big, And my baby's unborn." Saddled and bridled And booted rade he; Toom hame cam the saddle, But never cam he.	"My meadow lies green, Unreaped is my corn; My garner is empty, My child is unborn." All saddled, all bridled, Sharp weapons he bore; Home came the saddle, But he nevermore!

Professor Longfellow defends himself (I learn) from the charge of *imitation* in this case, by the assertion that he

did translate from Wolff, but that Wolff copied from Motherwell. I am willing to believe almost any thing than so gross a plagiarism as this seems to be—but there are difficulties which should be cleared up. In the first place how happens it that, in the transmission from the Scotch into German, and again from the German into English, not only the versification should have been rigidly preserved, but the *rhymes* and *alliterations?* Again, how are we to imagine that Mr. Longfellow, with his known intimate acquaintance with Motherwell's "Minstrelsy," did not at once recognize so remarkable a poem when he met it in Wolff? I have now before me a large volume of songs, ballads, etc., collected by Wolff; but there is here no such poem—and, to be sure it should not be sought in such a collection. No collection of his *own* poems has been published, and the piece of which we are in search of must be fugitive—unless, indeed, it is included in a volume of *translations* from various tongues, of which O. L. B. Wolff is also the author, but of which I am unable to obtain a copy.* It is by no means improbable that here the poem in question is to be found—but in this case it must have been plainly acknowledged as a translation, with its original designated. How, then, could Professor Longfellow have translated it as original with Wolff? These are mysteries yet to be solved. It is observable—peculiarly so—that the Scotch "Toom" is

* Sammlung vorzüglicher Volkslieder der bekanntesten Nationen, grostentheils zum ersten male, metrisch in das Deutsche ubertragen. Frankfurt, 1837.

left untranslated in the version of *Graham's Magazine.* Will it be found that the same omission occurs in Wolff's version?

In "The Spanish Student" of Mr. Longfellow, at page 80, will be found what follows:

SCENE IV.—PRECIOSA'S *chamber. She is sitting with a book in her hand near a table, on which are flowers. A bird singing in its cage. The* COUNT OF LARA *enters behind, unperceived. Preciosa reads.*

> All are sleeping, weary heart!
> Thou, thou only sleepless art!

Heigho! I wish Victorian were here.
I know not what it is makes me so restless!
Thou little prisoner with thy motley coat,
That from thy vaulted, wiry dungeon singest,
Like thee I am a captive, and, like thee,
I have a gentle gaoler. Lack-a-day!

> All are sleeping, weary heart!
> Thou, thou only sleepless art!
> All this throbbing, all this aching,
> Evermore shall keep thee waking,
> For a heart in sorrow breaking
> Thinketh ever of its smart!

Thou speakest truly, poet! and methinks
More hearts are breaking in this world of ours
Than one would say. In distant villages
And solitudes remote, where winds have wafted
The barbed seeds of love, or birds of passage
Scattered them in their flight, do they take root,

And grow in silence, and in silence perish.
Who hears the falling of the forest leaf?
Or who takes note of every flower that dies?
Heigho! I wish Victorian would come.
Dolores! [*Turns to lay down her book, and perceives the Count.*] Ha!

Lara. Señora, pardon me!

Preciosa. How 's this? *Dolores!*

Lara. Pardon me ——

Preciosa. Dolores!

Lara. Be not alarmed; I found no one in waiting.
If I have been too bold ——

Preciosa [*turning her back upon him*]. You are too bold!
Retire! retire, and leave me!

Lara. My dear lady,
First hear me! I beseech you, let me speak!
'T is for your good I come.

Preciosa [*turning toward him with indignation*]. Begone! begone!
You are the Count of Lara, but your deeds
Would make the statues of your ancestors
Blush on their tombs! Is it Castilian honor,
Is it Castilian pride, to steal in here
Upon a friendless girl, to do her wrong?
O shame! shame! shame! that you, a nobleman,
Should be so little noble in your thoughts
As to send *jewels* here to win my love,
And think to buy my honor with your gold!
I have no words to tell you how I scorn you!

Begone ! the sight of you is hateful to me !
Begone, I say !

A few passages further on, in the same scene, we meet the following stage directions : "*He tries to embrace her, she starts back and draws a dagger from her bosom.*" A little further still and "*Victorian enters from behind.*" Compare all this with a "Scene from Politian, an Unpublished Tragedy by Edgar A. Poe," to be found in the second volume of the *Southern Literary Messenger.*

The scene opens with the following stage directions :

A lady's apartment, with a window open and looking into a garden. LALAGE *in deep mourning, reading at a table, on which lie some books and a hand-mirror. In the background,* JACINTA *leans carelessly on the back of a chair.* * * *

Lalage reading. "It in another climate, so he said,
Bore a bright golden flower but not i' this soil.
[*Pauses, turns over some leaves, and then resumes.*]
No ling'ring winters there, nor snow, nor shower,
But ocean ever, to refresh mankind,
Breathes the shrill spirit of the western wind."
Oh, beautiful ! most beautiful ! how like
To what my fever'd soul doth dream of Heaven !
O happy land ! [*Pauses.*] She died—the maiden died—
O still more happy maiden who could n't die.
Jacinta ! [*Jacinta returns no answer, and Lalage presently resumes.*]
Again a similar tale,
Told of a beauteous dame beyond the sea !

Thus speaketh one Ferdinand i' the words of the play :
"She died full young"—one Bossola answers him :
"I think not so ; her infelicity
Seemed to have years too many." Ah, luckless lady !
Jacinta ! [*Still no answer.*] Here 's a far sterner story,
But like—oh, very like in its despair—
Of that Egyptian queen, winning so easily
A thousand hearts, losing at length her own.
She died. Thus endeth the history, and her maids
Lean over her and weep—two gentle maids
With gentle names, Eiros and Charmion.
Rainbow and Dove—*Jacinta !* * * *
[*Jacinta, finally, in a discussion about certain* jewels, *insults her mistress, who bursts into tears.*]
Lalage. Poor Lalage ! and is it come to this ?
Thy servant-maid ! —— but courage !—'t is but a viper
Whom thou hast cherished to sting thee to the soul !
[*Taking up the mirror.*]
Ha ! here at least 's a friend—too much a friend
In earlier days—a friend will not deceive thee.
Fair mirror and true ! now tell me, for thou canst,
A tale—a pretty tale—and heed thou not
Though it be rife with woe. It answers me,
It speaks of sunken eyes, and wasted cheeks,
And beauty long deceased—remembers me
Of Joy departed—Hope, the Seraph Hope
Inurned and entombed !—now, in a tone
Low, sad, and solemn, but most audible
Whispers of early grave untimely yawning

For ruined maid. Fair mirror and true ! thou liest not !
Thou hast no end to gain—no heart to break.
Castiglione lied who said he loved—
Thou true—he false !—false !—false !
[*While she speaks a Monk enters her apartment, and approaches unobserved.*]

Monk. Refuge thou hast,
Sweet daughter, in Heaven. Think of eternal things !
Give up thy soul to penitence, and pray.

Lalage. I cannot pray !—my soul is at war with God !
[*Arising hurriedly.*]
The frightful sounds of merriment below
Disturb my senses—go, I cannot pray !
The sweet airs from the garden worry me !
Thy presence grieves me—go !—thy priestly raiment
Fills me with dread—thy ebony crucifix
With horror and awe !

Monk. Think of thy precious soul !

Lalage. Think of my early days !—think of my father
And mother in Heaven ! think of our quiet home
And the rivulet that ran before the door !
Think of my little sisters !—think of them !
And think of me !—think of my trusting love
And confidence—his vows—my ruin—think—think
Of my unspeakable misery !—*begone !*
Yet stay ! yet stay ! what was it thou saidst of prayer
And penitence ? Didst thou not speak of faith
And vows before the throne ?

Monk. I did.

Lalage. 'T is well
There *is* a vow were fitting should be made—
A sacred vow, imperative, and urgent—
A solemn vow.

Monk. Daughter, this zeal is well.

Lalage. Father ! this zeal is any thing but well.
Hast thou a crucifix fit for this thing ?
A crucifix whereon to register
A pious vow ? [*He hands her his own.*]
Not that—oh ! no !—no ! no ! [*Shuddering.*]
Not that ! not that ! I tell thee, holy man,
Thy raiments and thy ebony cross affright me !
Stand back ! I have a crucifix myself—
I have a crucifix ! Methinks 't were fitting
The deed—the vow—the symbol of the deed—
And the deed's register should tally, father !
Behold the cross wherewith a vow like mine
Is written in Heaven !
[*Draws a cross-handled dagger and raises it on high.*]

Monk. Thy words are madness, daughter !
And speak a purpose unholy—thy lips are livid—
Thine eyes are wild—tempt not the wrath divine—
Pause ere too late !—oh ! be not—be not rash !
Swear not the oath—oh ! swear it not

Lalage. 'T is sworn !

The coincidences here are too markedly peculiar to be gainsaid. The sitting at the table with books, etc.—the flowers on the one hand, and the garden on the other —the presence of the pert maid—the reading aloud from

the book—the pausing and commenting—the plaintiveness of what is read, in accordance with the sorrow of the reader—the abstraction—the frequent calling of the maid by name—the refusal of the maid to answer—the jewels—the "begone"—the unseen entrance of a third person from behind—and the drawing of the dagger—are points sufficiently noticeable to establish at least the *imitation* beyond all doubt.

Let us now compare the concluding lines of Mr. Longfellow's "Autumn" with that of Mr. Bryant's "Thanatopsis." Mr. B. has it thus:

> So live, that when thy summons comes to join
> The innumerable caravan that moves
> To that mysterious realm where each shall take
> His chamber in the silent halls of Death,
> Thou go not, like the quarry slave at night,
> Scourged to his dungeon; but, sustained and soothed
> By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,
> Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
> About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

Mr. L. thus:

> To him the wind, aye and the yellow leaves,
> Shall have a voice and give him eloquent teachings.
> He shall so hear the solemn hymn that Death
> Has lifted up for all, that he shall go
> To his long resting-place without a tear.

Again, in his "Prelude to the Voices of the Night," Mr. Longfellow says:

> Look then into thine heart and write!

Sir Philip Sidney in the "Astrophal and Stella" has:

Foole, said my Muse to me, looke in thy heart and write !

Again, in Longfellow's "Midnight Mass" we read:

And the hooded clouds like friars.

The Lady in Milton's "Comus" says:

——When the gray-hooded even
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weeds.

And again:—these lines by Professor Longfellow will be remembered by everybody:

Art is long and time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still like muffled drums are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.

But if any one will turn to page 66 of John Sharpe's edition of Henry Headley's "Select Beauties of Ancient English Poetry," published at London in 1810, he will there find an Exequy on the death of his wife by Henry King, Bishop of Chichester, and therein also the following lines, where the author is speaking of following his wife *to the grave:*

But hark ! *my pulse, like a soft drum,*
Beats my approach—tells thee I come !
And slow howe'er my *marches* be,
I shall at last sit down by thee.

Were I disposed, indeed, to push this subject any further, I should have little difficulty in culling, from the works of the author of "Outre Mer," a score or two of imitations quite as palpable as any upon which I have in-

sisted. The fact of the matter is, that the friends of Mr. Longfellow, so far from undertaking to talk about my "carping littleness" in charging Mr. Longfellow with imitation, should have given me credit, under the circumstances, for great moderation in charging him with imitation alone. Had I accused him, in loud terms, of manifest and continuous plagiarism, I should but have echoed the sentiment of every man of letters in the land beyond the immediate influence of the Longfellow *coterie*. And since I, "knowing what I know and seeing what I have seen"—submitting in my own person to accusations of plagiarism for the very sins of this gentleman against myself—since I contented myself, nevertheless, with simply setting forth the *merits* of the poet in the strongest light, whenever an opportunity was afforded me, can it be considered either decorous or equitable on the part of Professor Longfellow to beset me, upon my first adventuring an infinitesimal sentence of dispraise, with ridiculous anonymous letters from his friends, and, moreover, with malice prepense, to instigate against me the pretty little witch entitled "Miss Walter"; advising her and instructing her to pierce me to death with the needles of innumerable epigrams, rendered unnecessarily and therefore cruelly painful to my feelings, by being first carefully deprived of the point?

It should not be supposed that I feel myself individually aggrieved in the letter of Outis. He has praised me even more than he has blamed. In replying to him,

my design has been to place fairly and distinctly before the literary public certain principles of criticism for which I have been long contending, and which, through sheer misrepresentation, were in danger of being misunderstood.

Having brought the subject, in this view, to a close, I now feel at liberty to add a few words, by way of freeing myself of any suspicion of malevolence or discourtesy. The thesis of my argument, in general, has been the definition of the grounds on which a charge of plagiarism may be based, and of the species of ratiocination by which it is to be established: that is all. It will be seen by any one who shall take the trouble to read what I have written, that I make *no* charge of moral delinquency against either Mr. Longfellow, Mr. Aldrich, or Mr. Hood,—indeed, lest in the heat of argument, I may have uttered any words which may admit of being tortured into such interpretation, I here fully disclaim them upon the spot.

In fact, the one strong point of defence for his friends has been unaccountably neglected by Outis. To attempt the rebutting of a charge of plagiarism by the broad assertion that no such thing as plagiarism exists, is a sotticism, and no more—but there would have been nothing of unreason in rebutting the charge as urged either against Mr. Longfellow, Mr. Aldrich, or Mr. Hood, by the proposition that no true poet can be guilty of a meanness—that the converse of this proposition is a contradiction in terms. Should there be found any one willing to dispute with

me this point, I would decline the disputation on the ground that my arguments are no arguments *to him.*

It appears to me that what seems to be the gross *inconsistency* of plagiarism as perpetrated by a poet, is very easily thus resolved:—the poetic sentiment (even without reference to the poetic power) implies a peculiarly, perhaps an abnormally, keen appreciation of the beautiful, with a longing for its assimilation, or absorption, into the poetic identity. What the poet intensely admires becomes thus, in very fact, although only partially, a portion of his own intellect. It has a secondary origination within his own soul—an origination altogether apart, although springing, from its primary origination from without. The poet is thus possessed by another's thought, and cannot be said to take of it, possession. But, in either view, he thoroughly feels it as *his own*—and this feeling is counteracted only by the sensible presence of its true, palpable origin in the volume from which he has derived it—an origin which, in the long lapse of years it is almost impossible *not* to forget—for in the meantime the thought itself is forgotten. But the frailest association will regenerate it—it springs up with all the vigor of a new birth—its absolute originality is not even a matter of suspicion—and when the poet has written it and printed it, and on its account is charged with plagiarism, there will be no one in the world more entirely astounded than himself. Now, from what I have said it will be evident that the liability to accidents of this character is in the direct ratio

of the poetic sentiment—of the susceptibility to the poetic impression; and in fact all literary history demonstrates that, for the most frequent and palpable plagiarisms, we must search the works of the most eminent poets.

MR. LONGFELLOW, MR. WILLIS, AND THE DRAMA.

A BIOGRAPHIST of Berryer calls him "*l'homme qui, dans sa description, demande le plus grande quantité possible d'antithèse*,"—but that ever recurring topic, the decline of the drama, seems to have consumed, of late, more of the material in question than would have sufficed for a dozen prime ministers—even admitting them to be French. Every trick of thought and every harlequinade of phrase have been put in operation for the purpose "*denier ce qui est, et d'expliquer ce qui n'est pas.*"

Cequi n'est pas—for the drama has *not declined.* The facts and the philosophy of the case seem to be these. The great opponent to progress is conservatism. In other words—the great adversary of invention is imitation :—the propositions are in spirit identical. Just as an art is imitative is it stationary. The most imitative arts are the most prone to repose—and the converse. Upon the utilitarian—upon the business arts, where necessity impels, invention, necessity's well-understood offspring, is ever in attendance. And the less we see of the mother

the less we behold of the child. No one complains of the decline of the art of engineering. Here the reason, which never retrogrades, or reposes, is called into play. But let us glance at sculpture. We are not *worse* here than the ancients, let pedantry say what it may (the Venus of Canova is worth, at any time, two of that of Cleomenes), but it is equally certain that we have made, in general, no advances; and sculpture, properly considered, is perhaps the *most* imitative of all arts which have a right to the title of art at all. Looking next at painting, we find that we have to boast of progress only in the ratio of the inferior imitativeness of painting, when compared with sculpture. As far, indeed, as we have any means of judging, our improvement has been exceedingly little, and did we know any thing of ancient art, in this department, we might be astonished at discovering that we had advanced even far less than we suppose. As regards architecture, whatever progress we have made has been precisely in those particulars which have no reference to imitation,—that is to say, we have improved the utilitarian and not the ornamental provinces of the art. Where reason predominated, we advanced; where mere feeling or taste was the guide, we remained as we were.

Coming to the drama, we shall see that in its mechanisms we have made progress, while in its spirituality we have done little or nothing for centuries certainly—and, perhaps, little or nothing for thousands of years. And this is because what we term the spirituality of the drama

is precisely its imitative portion—is exactly that portion which distinguishes it as one of the principal of the imitative arts.

Sculptors, painters, dramatists, are, from the very nature of their material,—their spiritual material—imitators—conservatists—prone to repose in old feeling and in antique taste. For this reason—and for this reason only—the arts of sculpture, painting, and the drama, have not advanced—or have advanced feebly, and inversely in the ratio of their imitativeness.

But it by no means follows that either has *declined*. All *seem* to have declined, because they have remained stationary while the multitudinous other arts (of reason) have flitted so rapidly by them. In the same manner the traveller by railroad can imagine that the trees by the wayside are retrograding. The trees in this case are absolutely stationary—but the drama has not been altogether so, although its progress has been so slight as not to interfere with the general effect—that of seeming retrogradation or decline.

This seeming retrogradation, however, is to all practical intents an absolute one. Whether the drama has declined, or whether it has merely remained stationary, is a point of no importance, so far as concerns the public encouragement of the drama. It is unsupported, in either case, because it does not deserve support.

But if this stagnation, or deterioration, grows out of the very idiosyncrasy of the drama itself, as one of the

principal of the imitative arts, how is it possible that a remedy shall be applied—since it is clearly impossible to alter the nature of the art, and yet leave it the art which it now is?

We have already spoken of the improvements effected in architecture, in all its utilitarian departments, and in the drama, at all the points of its mechanism. "Wherever reason predominates we advance; where mere feeling or taste is the guide, we remain as we are." We wish now to suggest that, by the engrafting of reason upon feeling or taste, we shall be able, and thus alone shall be able, to force the modern drama into the production of any profitable fruit.

At present, what is it we do? We are content if, with feeling and taste, a dramatist does *as other dramatists have done*. The most successful of the more immediately modern playwrights has been Sheridan Knowles, and to play Sheridan Knowles seems to be the highest ambition of our writers for the stage. Now the author of "The Hunchback," possesses what we are weak enough to term the true "dramatic feeling," and this true dramatic feeling he has manifested in the most preposterous series of imitations of the Elizabethan drama, by which ever mankind were insulted and beguiled. Not only did he adhere to the old plots, the old characters, the old stage conventionalities throughout; but he went even so far as to persist in the obsolete phraseologies of the Elizabethan period—and just in proportion to his obstinancy and ab-

surdity at all points, did we pretend to like him the better, and pretend to consider him a good dramatist.

Pretend—for every particle of it was pretence. Never was enthusiasm more utterly false than that which so many "respectable audiences" endeavored to get up for these plays—endeavored to get up, first, because there was a general desire to see the drama revive; and, secondly, because we had been all along entertaining the fancy that "the decline of the drama" meant little, if any thing, else than its deviation from the Elizabethan routine—and that, consequently, the return to the Elizabethan routine was, and of necessity must be, the revival of the drama.

But if the principles we have been at some trouble in explaining, are true—and most profoundly do we feel them to be so—if the spirit of imitation is, in fact, the real source of the drama's stagnation—and if it is so because of the tendency in all imitation to render reason subservient to feeling and to taste—it is clear that only by deliberate counteracting of the spirit, and of the tendency of the spirit, we can hope to succeed in the drama's revival.

The first thing necessary is to burn or bury the "old models," and to forget, as quickly as possible, that ever a play has been penned. The second thing is to consider *de novo* what are the *capabilities* of the drama—not merely what hitherto have been its conventional purposes. The third and last point has reference to the composition of a

play (showing to the fullest extent these capabilities) conceived and constructed with Feeling and with Taste, but with Feeling and Taste guided and controlled in every particular by the details of Reason—of Common-Sense,—in a word, of Natural Art.

It is obvious, in the meantime, that toward the good end in view much may be effected by discriminative criticism on what has already been done. The field, thus stated, is of course, practically illimitable—and to Americans the American drama is the special point of interest. We propose, therefore, in a series of papers, to take a somewhat deliberate survey of some few of the most noticeable American plays. We shall do this without reference either to the date of the composition, or its adaptation for the closet or the stage. We shall speak with absolute frankness both of merits and defects—our principal object being understood not as that of mere commentary on the individual play—but on the drama in general, and on the American drama in especial, of which each individual play is a constituent part. We will commence at once with

TORTESA, THE USURER.

This is the third dramatic attempt of Mr. Willis, and may be regarded as particularly successful, since it has received, both on the stage and in the closet, no stinted measure of commendation. This success, as well as the high reputation of the author, will justify us in a more extended notice of the play than might, under other circumstances, be desirable.

The story runs thus:—Tortesa, an usurer of Florence, and whose character is a mingled web of good and evil feelings, gets into his possession the palace and lands of a certain Count Falcone. The usurer would wed the daughter (Isabella) of Falcone not through love, but, in his own words,

"To please a devil that inhabits him,"—

in fact, to mortify the pride of the nobility, and avenge himself of their scorn. He therefore bargains with Falcone [a narrow-souled villain] for the hand of Isabella. The deed of the Falcone property is restored to the count, upon an agreement that the lady shall marry the usurer; this contract being invalid should Falcone change his mind in regard to the marriage, or should the maiden demur, but valid should the wedding be prevented through any fault of Tortesa, or through any accident not springing from the will of the father or child. The first scene makes us aware of this bargain, and introduces us to Zippa, a glover's daughter, who resolves, with a view of befriending Isabella, to feign a love for Tortesa, [which, in fact, she partially feels,] hoping thus to break off the match.

The second scene makes us acquainted with a young painter (Angelo), poor, but of high talents and ambition, and with his servant (Tomaso), an old bottle-loving rascal, entertaining no very exalted opinion of his master's abilities. Tomaso does some injury to a picture, and Angelo is about to run him through the body, when he is inter-

rupted by a sudden visit from the Duke of Florence, attended by Falcone. The duke is enraged at the murderous attempt, but admires the paintings in the studio. Finding that the rage of the great man will prevent his patronage if he knows the aggressor as the artist, Angelo, passes off Tomaso as himself (Angelo), making an exchange of names. This is a point of some importance, as it introduces the true Angelo to a job which he had long coveted—the painting of the portrait of Isabella, of whose beauty he had become enamoured through report. The duke wishes the portrait painted. Falcone, however, on account of a promise to Tortesa, would have objected to admit to his daughter's presence the handsome Angelo, but in regard to Tomaso, has no scruple. Supposing Tomaso to be Angelo and the artist, the count writes a note to Isabella, requiring her "to admit the painter Angelo." The real Angelo is thus admitted. He and the lady love at first sight (much in the manner of Romeo and Juliet), each ignorant of the other's attachment.

The third scene of the second act is occupied with a conversation between Falcone and Tortesa, during which a letter arrives from the duke, who, having heard of the intended sacrifice of Isabella, offers to redeem the count's lands and palace, and desires him to preserve his daughter for a certain Count Julian. But Isabella,—who, before seeing Angelo, had been willing to sacrifice herself for her father's sake, and who, since seeing him, had entertained hopes of escaping the hateful match through

means of a plot entered into by herself and Zippa,—Isabella, we say, is now in despair. To gain time, she at once feigns a love for the usurer, and indignantly rejects the proposal of the duke. The hour for the wedding draws near. The lady has prepared a sleeping potion, whose effects resemble those of death. (Romeo and Juliet.) She swallows it—knowing that her supposed corpse would lie at night, pursuant to an old custom, in the sanctuary of the cathedral; and believing that Angelo —whose love for herself she has elicited, by a stratagem, from his own lips—will watch by the body, in the strength of his devotion. Her ultimate design (we may suppose, for it is not told) is to confess all to her lover, on her revival, and throw herself upon his protection—their marriage being concealed, and herself regarded as dead by the world. Zippa, who *really* loves Angelo—(her love for Tortesa, it must be understood, is a very equivocal feeling, for the fact cannot be denied that Mr. Willis makes her love both at the same time)—Zippa, who really loves Angelo—who has discovered his passion for Isabella—and who, as well as that lady, believes that the painter will watch the corpse in the cathedral,—determines, through jealousy, to prevent his so doing, and with this view informs Tortesa that she has learned it to be Angelo's design to steal the body *for artistical purposes*—in short, as a model to be used in his studio. The usurer, in consequence, sets a guard at the doors of the cathedral. This guard does, in fact, prevent the lover

from watching the corpse, but, it appears, does *not* prevent the lady, on her revival and disappointment in not seeing the one she sought, from passing unperceived from the church. Weakened by her long sleep, she wanders aimlessly through the streets, and at length finds herself, when just sinking with exhaustion, at the door of her father. She has no recourse but to knock. The count, who here, we must say, acts very much as Thimble of old —the knight, we mean, of the "scolding wife,"—maintains that she is dead, and shuts the door in her face. In other words, he supposes it to be the ghost of his daughter who speaks; and so the lady is left to perish on the steps. Meantime Angelo is absent from home, attempting to get access to the cathedral; and his servant Tomaso takes the opportunity of absenting himself also, and of indulging his bibulous propensities while perambulating the town. He finds Isabella as we left her; and through motives which we will leave Mr. Willis to explain, conducts her unresistingly to Angelo's residence, and—*deposits her in Angelo's bed.* The artist now returns —Tomaso is kicked out of doors—and we are not told, but left to presume, that a full explanation and perfect understanding are brought about between the lady and her lover.

We find them, next morning, in the studio, where stands leaning against an easel, the portrait (a full length) of Isabella, with curtains adjusted before it. The stage-directions, moreover, inform us that "the back wall of

the room is such as to form a natural ground for the picture." While Angelo is occupied in retouching it, he is interrupted by the arrival of Tortesa with a guard, and is accused of having stolen the corpse from the sanctuary—the lady, meanwhile, having stepped behind the curtain. The usurer insists upon seeing the painting, with a view of ascertaining whether any new touches had been put upon it, which would argue an examination, *post mortem*, of those charms of neck and bosom which the living Isabella would not have unveiled. Resistance is vain—the curtain is torn down; but to the surprise of Angelo, the lady herself is discovered, "with her hands crossed on her breast, and her eyes fixed on the ground, standing motionless in the frame which had contained the picture." The *tableau*, we are to believe, deceives Tortesa, who steps back to contemplate what he supposes to be the portrait of his betrothed. In the meantime the guards, having searched the house, find the veil which had been thrown over the imagined corpse in the sanctuary; and, upon this evidence, the artist is carried before the duke. Here he is accused, not only of sacrilege, but of the murder of Isabella, and is about to be condemned to death, when his mistress comes forward in person; thus resigning herself to the usurer to save the life of her lover. But the nobler nature of Tortesa now breaks forth; and, smitten with admiration of the lady's conduct, as well as convinced that her love for himself was feigned, he resigns her to Angelo—although now feeling and acknowl-

edging for the first time that a fervent love has, in his own bosom, assumed the place of this misanthropic ambition which, hitherto, had alone actuated him in seeking her hand. Moreover, he endows Isabella with the lands of her father, Falcone. The lovers are thus made happy. The usurer weds Zippa; and the curtain drops upon the promise of the duke to honor the double nuptials with his presence.

This story, as we have given it, hangs better together (Mr. Willis will pardon our modesty) and is altogether more easily comprehended than in the words of the play itself. We have really put the best face upon the matter, and presented the whole in the simplest and clearest light in our power. We mean to say that "Tortesa" (partaking largely, in this respect, of the drama of Cervantes and Calderon) is over-clouded—rendered misty—by a world of unnecessary and impertinent *intrigue*. This folly was adopted by the Spanish comedy, and is imitated by us with the idea of imparting "action," "business," "vivacity." But vivacity, however desirable, can be attained in many other ways, and is dearly purchased, indeed, when the price is intelligibility.

The truth is that *cant* has never attained a more owl-like dignity than in the discussion of dramatic principle. A modern stage critic is nothing if not a lofty contemner of all things simple and direct. He delights in mystery—revels in mystification—has transcendental notions concerning P. S. and O. P., and talks about "stage business

and stage effect," as if he were discussing the differential calculus. For much of all this we are indebted to the somewhat over-profound criticisms of Augustus William Schlegel.

But the *dicta* of common-sense are of universal application, and, touching this matter of *intrigue*, if, from its superabundance, we are compelled, even in the quiet and critical *perusal* of a play, to pause frequently and reflect long—to re-read passages over and over again, for the purpose of gathering their bearing upon the whole—of maintaining in our mind a general connection—what but fatigue can result from the exertion? How then when we come to the representation?—when these passages—trifling, perhaps, in themselves, but important when considered in relation to the plot—are hurried and blurred over in the stuttering enunciation of some miserable rantipole, or admitted altogether through the constitutional loss of memory so peculiar to those lights of the age and stage, bedight (from being of no conceivable use) supernumeraries? For it must be borne in mind that these bits of *intrigue* (we use the term in the sense of the German critics) appertain generally, indeed altogether, to the after-thoughts of the drama—to the underplots—are met with, consequently, in the mouth of the lackeys and chamber-maids—and are thus consigned to the tender mercies of the *stellæ minores*. Of course we get but an imperfect idea of what is going on before our eyes. Action after action ensues whose mystery we cannot unlock

without the little key which these barbarians have thrown away and lost. Our weariness increases in proportion to the number of these embarrassments, and if the play escape damnation at all, it escapes *in spite* of that intrigue to which, in nine cases out of ten, the author attributes his success, and which he *will* persist in valuing exactly in proportion to the misapplied labor it has cost him.

But dramas of this kind are said, in our customary parlance, to "abound in *plot*." We have never yet met any one, however, who could tell us what precise ideas he connected with the phrase. A mere succession of incidents, even the most spirited, will no more constitute a plot, than a multiplication of zeros, even the most infinite, will result in the production of a unit. This all will admit —but few trouble themselves to think further. The common notion seems to be in favor of mere *complexity;* but a plot, properly understood, is perfect only inasmuch as we shall find ourselves unable to detach from it *or disarrange* any single incident involved, without *destruction* to the mass. This we say is the point of perfection—a point never yet attained, but not on that account unattainable. Practically, we may consider a plot as of high excellence, when no one of its component parts shall be susceptible of *removal* without *detriment* to the whole. Here, indeed, is a vast lowering of the demand—and with less than this no writer of refined taste should content himself.

As this subject is not only in itself of great importance,

but will have at all points a bearing upon what we shall say hereafter, in the examination of various plays, we shall be pardoned for quoting from the *Democratie Review* some passages (of our own) which enter more particularly into the rationale of the subject.

"All the Bridgewater treatises have failed in noticing the *great* idiosyncrasy in the Divine system of adaptation,—that idiosyncrasy which stamps the adaptation as divine, in distinction from that which is the work of merely human constructiveness. I speak of the complete *mutuality* of adaptation. For example:—In human constructions, a particular cause has a particular effect—a particular purpose brings about a particular object; but we see no reciprocity. The effect does not re-act upon the cause—the object does not change relations with the purpose. In divine constructions, the object is either object or purpose as we choose to regard it, while the purpose is either purpose or object; so that we can never (abstractly—without concretion—without reference to facts of the moment) decide which is which.

"For secondary example:—In polar climates, the human frame, to maintain its animal heat, requires, for combustion in the capillary system, an abundant supply of highly azotized food, such as train-oil. Again:—In polar climates nearly the sole food afforded man is the oil of abundant seals and whales. Now whether is oil at hand because imperatively demanded? or whether is it the only thing demanded because the only thing to be ob-

tained? It is impossible to say;—there is an absolute reciprocity of adaptation for which we seek in vain among the works of man.

"The Bridgewater tractists may have avoided this point, on account of its apparent tendency to overthrow the idea of *cause* in general—consequently of a First Cause—of God. But it is more probable that they have failed to perceive what no one preceding them has, to my knowledge, perceived.

"The pleasure which we derive from any exertion of human ingenuity, is in the direct ratio of the *approach* to this species of reciprocity between cause and effect. In the construction of *plot*, for example, in fictitious literature, we should aim at so arranging the points, or incidents, that we cannot distinctly see, in respect to any one of them, whether that one depends from any one other or upholds it. In this sense, of course, perfection of plot is unattainable *in fact*—because Man is the constructor. The plots of God are perfect. The Universe is a plot of God."

The pleasure derived from the contemplation of the unity resulting from plot, is far more intense than is ordinarily supposed, and, as in Nature we meet with no such combination of *incident*, appertains to a very lofty region of the ideal. In speaking thus we have not said that plot is more than an adjunct to the drama—more than a perfectly distinct and separable source of pleasure. It is *not* an essential. In its intense artificiality it may

even be conceived injurious in a certain degree (unless constructed with consummate skill) to that real *life-likeness* which is the soul of the drama of character. Good dramas have been written with very little plot—capital dramas might be written with none at all. Some plays of high merit, having plot, abound in irrelevant incident—in incident, we mean, which could be displaced or removed altogether without effect upon the plot itself, and yet are by no means objectionable as dramas; and for this reason—that the incidents are *evidently* irrelevant—*obviously* episodical. Of their digressive nature the spectator is so immediately aware, that he views them, as they arise, in the simple light of interlude, and does not fatigue his attention by attempting to establish for them a connection, or more than an illustrative connection, with the great interests of the subject. Such are the plays of Shakespeare. But all this is very different from *that* irrelevancy of intrigue which disfigures and very usually damns the work of the unskilful artist. With him the great error lies in *inconsequence*. Underplot is piled upon underplot (the very word is a paradox), and all to no purpose—*to no end*. The interposed incidents have no ultimate effect upon the main ones. They may hang upon the mass—they may even coalesce with it, or, as in some intricate cases, they may be so intimately blended as to be lost amid the chaos which they have been instrumental in bringing about—but still they have no portion in the plot, which exists, if at all, independently of

their influence. Yet the *attempt* is made by the author to establish and demonstrate a dependence—an identity; and it is the *obviousness of this attempt* which is the cause of weariness in the spectator, who, of course, cannot at once see that his attention is challenged to no purpose—that intrigues so obtrusively forced upon it are to be found, in the end, without effect upon the leading interests of the play.

"Tortesa" will afford us plentiful examples of this irrelevancy of intrigue—of this misconception of the nature and of the capacities of plot. We have said that our digest of the story is more easy of comprehension than the detail of Mr. Willis. If so, it is because we have forborne to give such portions as had no influence upon the whole. These served but to embarrass the narrative and fatigue the attention. How much was irrelevant is shown by the brevity of the space in which we have recorded, somewhat at length, all the influential incidents of a drama of five acts. There is scarcely a scene in which is not to be found the germ of an underplot—a germ, however, which seldom proceeds beyond the condition of a bud, or, if so fortunate as to swell into a flower, arrives, in no single instance, at the dignity of fruit. Zippa, a lady altogether without character (dramatic), is the most pertinacious of all conceivable concoctors of plans never to be matured—of vast designs that terminate in nothing—of *cul-de-sac* machinations. She plots in one page and counterplots in the next. She schemes her way from P. S. to

O. P., and intrigues perseveringly from the footlights to the slips. A very singular instance of the inconsequence of her manœuvres is found toward the conclusion of the play. The whole of the second scene (occupying five pages), in the fifth act, is obviously introduced for the purpose of giving her information, through Tomaso's means, of Angelo's arrest for the murder of Isabella. Upon learning his danger she rushes from the stage, to be present at the trial, exclaiming that her evidence can save his life. We, the audience, of course applaud, and now look with interest to her movements in the scene of the judgment-hall. She, Zippa, we think, is somebody after all; she will be the means of Angelo's salvation; she will thus be the chief unraveller of the plot. All eyes are bent, therefore, upon Zippa—but alas! upon the point at issue Zippa does not so much as open her mouth. It is scarcely too much to say that not a single action of this impertinent little busybody has any real influence upon the play; yet she appears upon every occasion—appearing only to perplex.

Similar things abound; we should not have space even to allude to them all. The whole conclusion of the play is supererogatory. The immensity of pure *fuss* with which it is overloaded forces us to the reflection that all of it might have been avoided by one word of explanation to the duke—an amiable man who admires the talents of Angelo, and who, *to prevent Isabella's marrying against her will*, had *previously* offered to free Falcone of his

bonds to the usurer. That he would free him *now*, and thus set all matters straight, the spectator cannot doubt for an instant, and he can conceive no better reason why explanations are *not* made, than that Mr. Willis does not think proper they should be. In fact, the whole drama is exceedingly ill *motivirt*.

We have already mentioned an inadvertence, in the fourth act, where Isabella is made to escape from the sanctuary through the midst of guards who prevented the ingress of Angelo. Another occurs where Falcone's conscience is made to reprove him, upon the appearance of his daughter's supposed ghost, for having occasioned her death by forcing her to marry against her will. The author had forgotten that Falcone submitted to the wedding, after the duke's interposition, only upon Isabella's assurance *that she really loved the usurer*. In the third scene, too, of the first act, the imagination of the spectator is no doubt a little taxed, when he finds Angelo, in the first moment of his introduction to the palace of Isabella, commencing her portrait by laying on color after color, before he has made any attempt at an outline. In the last act, moreover, Tortesa gives to Isabella a deed

> Of the Falcone palaces and lands,
> And all the money forfeit by Falcone.

This is a terrible blunder, and the more important as upon this act of the usurer depends the development of his new-born sentiments of honor and virtue—depends, in fact, the most salient *point* of the play. Tortesa, we say,

gives to Isabella the lands forfeited by Falcone; but Tortesa was surely not very generous in giving what, clearly, was not his own to give. Falcone had *not forfeited* the deed, which had been restored to him by the usurer, and which was then in his (Falcone's) possession. Hear Tortesa:

> He put it in the bond,
> *That if, by any humor of my own,*
> Or accident that came not from himself,
> Or from his daughter's will, the match were marred,
> *His tenure stood intact.*

Now Falcone is still resolute for the match; but this new, generous "humor" of Tortesa induces him (Tortesa) to decline it. Falcone's tenure is then intact; he retains the deed, the usurer is giving away property not his own.

As a drama of character "Tortesa" is by no means open to so many objections as when we view it in the light of its plot; but it is still faulty. The merits are so exceedingly negative, that it is difficult to say any thing about them. The duke is nobody; Falcone, nothing; Zippa, less than nothing. Angelo may be regarded simply as the medium through which Mr. Willis conveys to the reader his own glowing feelings—his own refined and delicate fancy (delicate, yet bold)—his own rich voluptuousness of sentiment—a voluptuousness which would offend in almost any other language than that in which it is so skilfully apparelled. Isabella is—the heroine of "The Hunchback." The revolution in the character of Tortesa—or rather the final triumph of his innate virtue—is a

dramatic point far older than the hills. It may be observed, too, that although the representation of no human character should be quarrelled with for its inconsistency, we yet require that the inconsistencies be not absolute antagonisms to the extent of neutralization; they may be permitted to be oils and waters, but they must not be alkalies and acids. When, in the course of the *denouement*, the usurer burst forth into an eloquence virtue-inspired, we cannot sympathize very heartily in his fine speeches, since they proceed from the mouth of the self-same egotist who, urged by a disgusting vanity, uttered so many sotticisms (about his fine legs, etc.) in the earlier passages of the play. Tomaso is, upon the whole, the best personage. We recognize some originality in his conception, and conception was seldom more admirably carried out.

One or two observations at random. In the third scene of the fifth act, Tomaso, the buffoon, is made to assume paternal authority over Isabella (as usual, without sufficient purpose) by virtue of a law which Tortesa thus expounds:

> My gracious liege, there is a law in Florence,
> That if a father, for no guilt or shame,
> Disown and shut his door upon his daughter,
> She is the child of him who succors her,
> Who by the shelter of a single night,
> Becomes endowed with the authority
> Lost by the other.

No one, of course, can be made to believe that any such stupid law as this ever existed either in Florence or Tim-

buctoo; but, on the ground *que le vrai n'est pas toujours le vraisemblable*, we say that even its real existence would be no justification of Mr. Willis. It has an air of the far-fetched—of the desperate—which a fine taste will avoid as a pestilence. Very much of the same nature is the attempt of Tortesa to extort a second bond from Falcone. The evidence which convicts Angelo of murder is ridiculously frail. The idea of Isabella's assuming the place of the portrait, and so deceiving the usurer, is not only glaringly improbable, but seems adopted from the "Winter's Tale." But in this latter play the deception is at least possible, for the human figure but imitates a statue. What, however, are we to make of Mr. W.'s stage direction about the back walls being "so arranged as to form a natural ground for the picture"? Of course, the very slightest movement of Tortesa (and he makes many) would have annihilated the illusion by disarranging the perspective; and in no manner could this latter have been arranged at all for more than one particular point of view —in other words, for more than one particular person in the whole audience. The "asides," moreover, are unjustifiably frequent. The prevalence of this folly (of speaking aside) detracts as much from the acting merit of our drama generally, as any other inartisticality. It utterly destroys verisimilitude. People are not in the habit of soliloquizing aloud—at least, not to any positive extent; and why should an author have to be told, what the slightest reflection would teach him, that an audience, by

dint of no imagination, can or will conceive that what is sonorous in their own ears at the distance of fifty feet, cannot be heard by an actor at the distance of one or two?

Having spoken thus of "Tortesa" in terms of nearly unmitigated censure, our readers may be surprised to hear us say that we think highly of the drama as a whole, and have little hesitation in ranking it before most of the dramas of Sheridan Knowles. Its leading faults are those of the modern drama generally; they are not peculiar to itself, while its great merits *are*. If in support of our opinions, we do not cite points of commendation, it is because these form the mass of the work. And were we to speak of fine passages, we should speak of the entire play. Nor by "fine passages" do we mean passages of merely fine language, embodying fine sentiment, but such as are replete with truthfulness, and teem with the loftiest qualities of the dramatic art. *Points*—capital points abound; and these have far more to do with the general excellence of a play than a too speculative criticism has been willing to admit. Upon the whole, we are proud of "Tortesa,"—and here again, for the fiftieth time at least, record our warm admiration of the abilities of Mr. Willis.

We proceed now to Mr. Longfellow's

SPANISH STUDENT.

The reputation of its author as a poet, and as a graceful writer of prose, is, of course, long and deservedly estab-

lished—but as a dramatist he was unknown before the publication of this play. Upon its original appearance, in *Graham's Magazine*, the general opinion was greatly in favor—if not exactly of "The Spanish Student"—at all events of the writer of "Outre-Mer." But this general opinion is the most equivocal thing in the world. It is never self-formed. It has very seldom indeed an original development. In regard to the work of an already famous or infamous author it decides, to be sure, with a laudable promptitude; making up all the mind that it has, by reference to the reception of the author's immediately previous publication;—making up thus the ghost of a mind *pro tem.*—a species of critical shadow, that fully answers, nevertheless, all the purposes of a substance itself, until the substance itself shall be forthcoming. But, beyond this point, the general opinion can only be considered that of the public, as a man may call a book *his*, having bought it. When a *new* writer arises, the shop of the true, thoughtful, or critical opinion, is not simultaneously thrown away—is not immediately set up. Some weeks elapse; and, during this interval, the public, at a loss where to procure an opinion of the *débutante*, have necessarily no opinion of him at all, for the nonce.

The popular voice, then, which ran so much in favor of "The Spanish Student," upon its original issue, should be looked upon as merely the ghost *pro tem.*—as based upon critical decisions respecting the previous works of the author—as having reference in no manner to "The Span-

ish Student" itself—and thus as utterly meaningless and valueless *per se*.

The few—by which we mean those who think, in contradistinction from the many who think they think—the few who think at first hand, and thus twice before speaking at all—these received the play with a commendation somewhat less *prononcée*—somewhat more guardedly qualified—than Professor Longfellow might have desired, or may have been taught to expect. Still the composition was approved upon the whole. The few words of censure were very far, indeed, from amounting to condemnation. The chief defect insisted upon was the feebleness of the *denouement*, and, generally, of the concluding scenes, as compared with the opening passages. We are not sure, however, that any thing like detailed criticism has been attempted in the case—nor do we propose now to attempt it. Nevertheless, the work has interest, not only within itself, but as the first dramatic effort of an author who has remarkably succeeded in almost every other department of light literature than that of the drama. It may be as well, therefore, to speak of it, if not analytically, at least somewhat in detail; and we cannot, perhaps, more suitably commence than by a quotation, without comment, of some of the finer passages.

> And, though she is a virgin outwardly,
> Within she is a sinner; like those panels
> Of doors and altar-pieces the old monks
> Painted in convents, with the Virgin Mary
> On the outside, and on the inside Venus. * * *

I believe
That woman, in her deepest degradation,
Holds something sacred, something undefiled,
Some pledge and keepsake of her higher nature,
And, like the diamond in the dark, retains
Some quenchless gleam of the celestial light. * * *

And we shall sit together unmolested,
And words of true love pass from tongue to tongue,
As singing birds from one bough to another. * * *

Our feelings and our thoughts
Tend ever on and rest not in the Present.
As drops of rain fall into some dark well,
And from below comes a scarce audible sound,
So fall our thoughts into the dark Hereafter,
And their mysterious echo reaches us. * * *

Her tender limbs are still, and, on her breast,
The cross she prayed to, ere she fell asleep,
Rises or falls with the soft tide of dreams,
Like a light barge safe-moored. * * *

Hark! how the large and ponderous mace of Time
Knocks at the golden portals of the day! * * *

The lady Violante, bathed in tears
Of love and anger, like the maid of Colchis,
Whom thou, another faithless Argonaut,
Having won that golden fleece, a woman's love,
Desertest for this Glaucé. * * *

I read or sit in reverie and watch
The changing color of the waves that break
Upon the idle sea-shore of the mind. * * *

I will forget her. All dear recollections
Pressed in my heart, like flowers within a book,
Shall be torn out and scattered to the winds. * * *

O yes! I see it now—
Yet rather with my heart than with mine eyes,

So faint it is. And all my thoughts sail thither,
Freighted with prayers and hopes, and forward urged
Against all stress of accident, as, in
The Eastern Tale, against the wind and tide
Great ships were drawn to the Magnetic Mountains. * * *

But there are brighter dreams than those of Fame,
Which are the dreams of Love ! Out of the heart
Rises the bright ideal of these dreams,
As from some woodland fount a spirit rises
And sinks again into its silent deeps,
Ere the enamoured knight can touch her robe !
'T is this ideal that the soul of Man,
Like the enamoured knight beside the fountain,
Waits for upon the margin of Life's stream ;
Waits to behold her rise from the dark waters,
Clad in a mortal shape ! Alas, how many
Must wait in vain ! The stream flows evermore,
But from its silent deeps no spirit rises !
Yet I, born under a propitious star,
Have found the bright ideal of my dreams. * * *

Yes ; by the Darro's side
My childhood passed. I can remember still
The river, and the mountains capped with snow ;
The villages where, yet a little child,
I told the traveller's fortune in the street ;
The smuggler's horse ; the brigand and the shepherd ;
The march across the moor ; the halt at noon ;
The red fire of the evening camp, that lighted
The forest where we slept ; and, further back,
As in a dream, or in some former life,
Gardens and palace walls. * * *

This path will lead us to it,
Over the wheat-fields, where the shadows sail
Across the running sea, now green, now blue,
And, like an idle mariner on the ocean,
Whistles the quail. * * *

These extracts will be universally admired. They are

graceful, well expressed, imaginative, and altogether replete with the true poetic feeling. We quote them *now*, at the beginning of our review, by way of justice to the poet, and because, in what follows, we are not sure that we have more than a very few words of what may be termed commendation to bestow.

"The Spanish Student" has an unfortunate beginning, in a most unpardonable, and yet, to render the matter worse, in a most indispensable, "Preface":

"The subject of the following play [says Mr. L.] is taken in part from the beautiful play of Cervantes, 'La Gitanilla.' To this source, however, I am indebted for the main incident only, the love of a Spanish student for a gipsy girl, and the name of the heroine, Preciosa. I have not followed the story in any of its details. In Spain this subject has been twice handled dramatically: first by Juan Perez de Montalvan, in 'La Gitanilla,' and afterward by Antonio de Solis y Rivadeneira in 'La Gitanilla de Madrid.' The same subject has also been made use of by Thomas Middleton, an English dramatist of the seventeenth century. His play is called 'The Spanish Gipsy.' The main plot is the same as in the Spanish pieces; but there runs through it a tragic underplot of the loves of Rodrigo and Doña Clara, which is taken from another tale of Cervantes, 'La Fuerza de la Sangre.' The reader who is acquainted with 'La Gitanilla' of Cervantes, and the plays of Montalvan, Solis, and Middleton, will perceive that my treatment of the subject differs entirely from theirs."

Now the autorial originality, properly considered, is

threefold. There is, first, the originality of the general thesis; secondly, that of the several incidents, or thoughts, by which the thesis is developed; and, thirdly, that of manner, or *tone*, by which means alone, an old subject, even when developed through hackneyed incidents, or thoughts, may be made to produce a fully original *effect* —which, after all, is the end truly in view.

But originality, as it is one of the highest, is also one of the rarest, of merits. In America it is especially, and very remarkably, rare—this through causes sufficiently well understood. We are content perforce, therefore, as a general thing, with either of the lower branches of originality mentioned above, and would regard with high favor, indeed, any author who should supply the great *desideratum* in combining the three. Still the three *should* be combined; and from whom, if not from such men as Professor Longfellow—if not from those who occupy the chief niches in our Literary Temple—shall we expect the combination? But in the present instance, what has Professor Longfellow accomplished? Is he original at any one point? Is he original in respect to the first and most important of our three divisions? "The *subject* of the following play," he says himself, "is taken *in part* from the beautiful play of Cervantes, 'La Gitanilla.'" "To this source, however, I am indebted for *the main incident only*, the love of a Spanish student for a gipsy girl, and the name of the heroine, Preciosa."

The italics are our own, and the words italicized involve

an obvious contradiction. We cannot understand how "the love of the Spanish student for the gipsy girl" can be called an "incident," or even a "main incident," at all. In fact, this love—this discordant and therefore eventful or incidentful love—is the true *thesis* of the drama of Cervantes. It is this anomalous "love" which originates the incidents by means of which, itself, this "love," the thesis, is developed. Having based his play, then, upon this "love," we cannot admit his claim to originality upon our first count; nor has he any right to say that he has adopted his "subject" "in part." It is clear that he has adopted it altogether. Nor would he have been entitled to claim originality of subject, even had he based his story upon *any variety* of love arising between parties naturally separated by prejudices of *caste*—such, for example, as those which divide the Brahmin from the Pariah, the Ammonite from the African, or even the Christian from the Jew. For here, in its ultimate analysis, is the real thesis of the Spaniard. But when the drama is founded, not merely upon this general thesis, but upon this general thesis in the identical application given it by Cervantes—that is to say, upon the prejudice of *caste* exemplified in the case of a Catholic, and this Catholic a Spaniard, and this Spaniard a student, and this student loving a gipsy, and this gipsy a dancing-girl, and this dancing-girl bearing the name Preciosa—we are not altogether prepared to be informed by Professor Longfellow that he is indebted for an "incident only" to the "beautiful 'Gitanilla' of Cervantes."

Whether our author is original upon our second and third points—in the true incidents of his story, or in the manner and *tone* of their handling—will be more distinctly seen as we proceed.

It is to be regretted that "The Spanish Student" was not sub-entitled "A Dramatic Poem," rather than "A Play." The former title would have more fully conveyed the intention of the poet; for, of course, we shall not do Mr. Longfellow the injustice to suppose that his design has been, in any respect, *a play*, in the ordinary acceptation of the term. Whatever may be its merits in a merely poetical view, "The Spanish Student" could not be endured upon the stage.

Its plot runs thus:—Preciosa, the daughter of a Spanish gentleman, is stolen, while an infant, by gipsies; brought up as his own daughter, and as a dancing-girl, by a gipsy leader, Crusado; and by him betrothed to a young gipsy, Bartolomé. At Madrid Preciosa loves and is beloved by Victorian, a student of Alcalda, who resolves to marry her, notwithstanding her *caste*, rumors involving her purity, the dissuasions of his friends, and his betrothal to an heiress of Madrid. Preciosa is also sought by the Count of Lara, a *roué*. She rejects him. He forces his way into her chamber, and is there seen by Victorian, who, misinterpreting some words overheard, doubts the fidelity of his mistress, and leaves her in anger, after challenging the Count of Lara. In the duel, the count receives his life at the hands of Victorian; declares his ignorance

of the understanding between Victorian and Preciosa; boasts of favors received from the latter; and, to make good his words, produces a ring which she gave him, he asserts, as a pledge of her love. This ring is a duplicate of one previously given the girl by Victorian, and known to have been so given by the count. Victorian mistakes it for his own, believes all that has been said, and abandons the field to his rival, who, immediately afterward, while attempting to procure access to the gipsy, is assassinated by Bartolomé. Meanwhile, Victorian, wandering through the country, reaches Guadarrama. Here he receives a letter from Madrid, disclosing the treachery practised by Lara, and telling that Preciosa, rejecting his addresses, had been, through his instrumentality hissed from the stage, and now again roamed with the gipsies. He goes in search of her; finds her in a wood near Guadarrama; approaches her, disguising his voice; she recognizes him, pretending she does not, and unaware that he knows her innocence; a conversation of *équivoque* ensues; he sees his ring upon her finger; offers to purchase it; she refuses to part with it; a full *éclaircissement* takes place; at this juncture, a servant of Victorian's arrives with "news from court," giving the first intimation of the true parentage of Preciosa. The lovers set out, forthwith, for Madrid to see the newly discovered father. On the route Bartolomé dogs their steps; fires at Preciosa; misses her; the shot is returned; he falls; and "The Spanish Student" is concluded.

This plot, however, like that of "Tortesa," looks better in our naked digest than amidst the details which develop only to disfigure it. The reader of the play itself will be astonished, when he remembers the name of the author, at the inconsequence of the incidents—at the utter want of skill—of art—manifested in their conception and introduction. In dramatic writing, no principle is more clear than that nothing should be said or done which has not a tendency to develop the catastrophe, or the characters. But Mr. Longfellow's play abounds in events and conversations that have no ostensible purpose, and certainly answer no end. In what light, for example, since we cannot suppose this drama intended for the stage, are we to regard the second scene of the second act, where a long dialogue between an archbishop and a cardinal is wound up by a dance from Preciosa? The Pope thinks of abolishing public dances in Spain, and the priests in question have been delegated to examine, personally, the proprieties or improprieties of such exhibitions. With this view, Preciosa is summoned and required to give a specimen of her skill. Now this, in a mere spectacle, would do very well; for here all that is demanded is an occasion or an excuse for a dance; but what business has it in a pure drama? or in what regard does it further the end of a dramatic poem intended only to be read? In the same manner, the whole of scene the eighth, in the same act, is occupied with six lines of stage directions, as follows:

The Theatre. The orchestra plays the Cachuca. Sound of castanets behind the scenes. The curtain rises and discovers Preciosa in the attitude of commencing the dance. The Cachuca. Tumult. Hisses. Cries of Brava! and Aguera! She falters and pauses. The music stops. General confusion. Preciosa faints.

But the *inconsequence* of which we complain will be best exemplified by an entire scene. We take scene the fourth, act the first:

An inn on the road to Alcalá. BALTASAR *asleep on a bench. Enter* CHISPA.

Chispa. And here we are, half way to Alcalá, between cocks and midnight. Body o' me! what an inn is this! The light out and the landlord asleep! Holá! ancient Baltasar!

Baltasar [*waking*]. Here I am.

Chispa. Yes, there you are, like a one-eyed alcade in a town without inhabitants. Bring a light, and let me have supper.

Baltasar. Where is your master?

Chispa. Do not trouble yourself about him. We have stopped a moment to breathe our horses; and if he chooses to walk up and down in the open air, looking into the sky as one who hears it rain, that does not satisfy my hunger, you know. But be quick, for I am in a hurry, and every one stretches his legs according to the length of his coverlet. What have we here?

Baltasar [*setting a light on the table*]. Stewed rabbit.

Chispa [*eating*]. Conscience of Portalegre! stewed kitten, you mean!

Baltasar. And a pitcher of Pedro Ximenes, with a roasted pear in it.

Chispa [*drinking*]. Ancient Baltasar, amigo! You know how to cry wine and sell vinegar. I tell you this is nothing but vino tinto of La Mancha, with a tang of the swine-skin.

Baltasar. I swear to you by Saint Simon and Judas, it is all as I say.

Chispa. And I swear to you by Saint Peter and Saint Paul, that it is no such thing. Moreover, your supper is like the hidalgo's dinner—very little meat, and a great deal of table-cloth.

Baltasar. Ha! ha! ha!

Chispa. And more noise than nuts.

Baltasar. Ha! ha! ha! You must make your joke, Master Chispa. But shall I not ask Don Victorian in to take a draught of the Pedro Ximenes?

Chispa. No; you might as well say, "Don't you want some" to a dead man.

Baltasar. Why does he go so often to Madrid?

Chispa. For the same reason that he eats no supper. He is in love. Were you ever in love, Baltasar?

Baltasar. I was never out of it, good Chispa. It has been the torment of my life.

Chispa. What! are you on fire, too, old hay-stack? Why, we shall never be able to put you out.

Victorian [*without*]. Chispa!

Chispa. Go to bed, Pero Grullo, for the cocks are crowing.

Victorian. Ea! Chispa! Chispa!

Chispa. Ea! Señor. Come with me, ancient Baltasar, and

bring water for the horses. I will pay for the supper to-morrow. [*Exeunt.*]

Now here the question occurs—what is accomplished? How has the subject been forwarded? We did not need to learn that Victorian was in love—that was known before; and all that we glean is that a stupid imitation of Sancho Panza drinks, in the course of two minutes (the time occupied in the perusal of the scene), a bottle of vino tinto, by way of Pedro Ximenes, and devours a stewed kitten in place of a rabbit.

In the beginning of the play this Chispa is the 'valet of Victorian; subsequently we find him the servant of another; and near the *dénouement* he returns to his original master. No cause is assigned, and not even the shadow of an object is attained; the whole tergiversation being but another instance of the gross inconsequence which abounds in the play.

The author's deficiency of skill is especially evinced in the scene of the *éclaircissement* between Victorian and Preciosa. The former having been enlighted respecting the true character of the latter, by means *of a letter* received at Guadarrama from a friend at Madrid, (how wofully inartistical is this!) resolves to go in search of her forthwith, and forthwith, also, discovers her in a wood close at hand. Whereupon he approaches, disguising *his voice*,—yes, we are required to believe that a lover may so disguise his voice from his mistress as even to render his person in full view irrecognizable! He approaches,

and each knowing the other, a conversation ensues under the hypothesis that each to the other is unknown—a very unoriginal and, of course, a very silly source of *équivoque*, fit only for the gum-elastic imagination of an infant. But what we especially complain of here, is that our poet should have taken so many and so obvious pains to bring about this position of *équivoque*, when it was impossible that it could have served any other purpose than that of injuring his intended effect! Read, for example, this passage:

Victorian. I never loved a maid;
For she I loved was then a maid no more.
Preciosa. How know you that?
Victorian. A little bird in the air
Whispered the secret.
Preciosa. There, take back your gold!
Your hand is cold like a deceiver's hand!
There is no blessing in its charity!
Make her your wife, for you have been abused;
And you shall mend your fortunes mending hers.
Victorian. How like an angel's speaks the tongue of woman,
When pleading in another's cause her own!

Now, here it is clear that if we understood Preciosa to be really ignorant of Victorian's identity, the "pleading in another's cause her own," would create a favorable impression upon the reader, or spectator. But the advice—"Make her your wife," etc.—takes an interested and

selfish turn when we remember that she knows to whom she speaks.

Again, when Victorian says:

> That is a pretty ring upon your finger,
> Pray give it me!

And when she replies:

> No, never from my hand
> Shall that be taken,

we are inclined to think her only an artful coquette, knowing, as we do, the extent of her knowledge; on the other hand, we should have applauded her constancy (as the author intended) had she been represented ignorant of Victorian's presence. The effect upon the audience, in a word, would be pleasant in place of disagreeable were the case altered as we suggest, while the effect upon Victorian would remain altogether untouched.

A still more remarkable instance of deficiency in the dramatic *tact* is to be found in the mode of bringing about the discovery of Preciosa's parentage. In the very moment of the *éclaircissement* between the lovers, Chispa arrives almost as a matter of course, and settles the point in a sentence:

> Good news from Court! Good news! Beltran Cruzado,
> The Count of the Calés is not your father,
> But your true father has returned to Spain
> Laden with wealth. You are no more a gipsy.

Now here are three points:—first, the extreme baldness, platitude, and *independence* of the incident narrated by Chispa. The *opportune* return of the father (we are tempted to say the *excessively* opportune) stands by itself —has no relation to any other event in the play—does not appear to arise, in the way of *result*, from any incident or incidents that have arisen before. It has the air of a happy chance, of a God-send, of an ultra-accident, invented by the playwright by way of compromise for his lack of invention. *Nec Deus intersit*, etc.—but here the god has interposed, and the knot is laughably unworthy of the god.

The second point concerns the return of the father "laden with wealth." The lover has abandoned his mistress in her poverty, and, while yet the words of his proffered reconciliation hang upon his lips, comes his own servant with the news that the mistress' father has returned "laden with wealth." Now, so far as regards the audience, who are behind the scenes and know the fidelity of the lover—so far as regards the audience, all is right; but the poet had no business to place his heroine in the sad predicament of being forced, provided she is not a fool, to suspect both the ignorance and the disinterestedness of the hero.

The third point has reference to the words—"You are now no more a gipsy." The thesis of this drama, as we have already said, is love disregarding the prejudices of *caste*, and in the development of this thesis, the powers

of the dramatist have been engaged, or should have been engaged, during the whole of the three acts of the play. The interest excited lies in our admiration of the sacrifice, and of the love that could make it; but this interest immediately and disagreeably subsides when we find that the sacrifice has been made to no purpose. "You are no more a gipsy" dissolves the charm, and obliterates the whole impression which the author has been at so much labor to convey. Our romantic sense of the hero's chivalry declines into a complacent satisfaction with his fate. We drop our enthusiasm, with the enthusiast, and jovially shake by the hand the mere man of good luck. But is not the latter feeling the more comfortable of the two? Perhaps so; but "comfortable" is not exactly the word Mr. Longfellow might wish applied to the end of his drama, and then why be at the trouble of building up an effect through a hundred and eighty pages, merely to knock it down at the end of the hundred and eighty-first?

We have already given, at some length, our conceptions of the nature of *plot*—and of that of "The Spanish Student," it seems almost superfluous to speak at all. It has nothing of construction about it. Indeed there is scarcely a single incident which has any necessary dependence upon any one other. Not only might we take away two thirds of the whole without ruin—but without detriment—indeed with a positive benefit to the mass. And, even as regards the mere order of arrangement, we

might with a very decided *chance* of improvement, put the scenes in a bag, give them a shake or two by way of shuffle, and tumble them out. The whole mode of collocation—not to speak of the feebleness of the incidents in themselves—evinces, on the part of the author, an utter and radical want of the adapting or constructive power which the drama so imperatively demands.

Of the unoriginality of the thesis we have already spoken; and now, to the unoriginality of the events by which the thesis is developed, we need do little more than allude. What, indeed, *could* we say of such incidents as the child stolen by gypsies—as her education as a *danseuse*—as her betrothal to a gipsy—as her preference for a gentleman—as the rumors against her purity—as her persecution by a *roué*—as the inruption of the *roué* into her chamber—as the consequent misunderstanding between her and her lover—as the duel—as the defeat of the *roué*—as the receipt of his life from the hero—as his boasts of success with the girl—as the *ruse* of the duplicate ring—as the field, in consequence, abandoned by the lover—as the assassination of Lara while scaling the girl's bedchamber—as the disconsolate peregrination of Victorian—as the *équivoque* scene with Preciosa—as the offering to purchase the ring and the refusal to part with it—as the "news from court" telling of the gipsy's true parentage—what *could* we say of all these ridiculous things, except that we have met them, each and all, some two or three hundred times before, and that they have formed, in a

greater or less degree, the staple material of every Hop-O'My-Thumb tragedy since the Flood? There is not an incident, from the first page of "The Spanish Student" to the last and most satisfactory, which we would not undertake to find boldly, at ten minutes' notice, in some one of the thousand and one comedies of intrigue attributed to Calderon and Lope de Vega.

But if our poet is grossly unoriginal in his subject, and in the events which evolve it, may he not be original in his handling or *tone?* We really grieve to say that he is not, unless, indeed, we grant him the meed of originality for the peculiar manner in which he has jumbled together the quaint and stilted tone of the old English dramatists with the *dégagée* air of Cervantes. But this is a point upon which, through want of space, we must necessarily permit the reader to judge altogether for himself. We quote, however, a passage from the second scene of the first act, by way of showing how very easy a matter it is to make a man discourse Sancho Panza:

Chispa. Abernuncio Satanas! and a plague upon all lovers who ramble about at night, drinking the elements, instead of sleeping quietly in their beds. Every dead man to his cemetery, say I; and every friar to his monastery. Now, here 's my master Victorian, yesterday a cow-keeper and to-day a gentleman; yesterday a student and to-day a lover; and I must be up later than the nightingale, for as the abbot sings so must the sacristan respond. God grant he may soon be married, for then shall all this serenading cease. Ay, marry, marry,

marry! Mother, what does marry mean? It means to spin, to bear children, and to weep, my daughter! And, of a truth, there is something more in matrimony than the wedding-ring. And now, gentlemen, pax vobiscum! as the ass said to the cabbages!

And, we might add, as an ass *only* should say.

In fact, throughout "The Spanish Student," as well as throughout other compositions of its author, there runs a very obvious vein of *imitation*. We are perpetually reminded of something we have seen before—some old acquaintance in manner or matter; and even where the similarity cannot be said to amount to plagiarism, it is still injurious to the poet in the good opinion of him who reads.

Among the minor defects of the play, we may mention the frequent allusion to book incidents not generally known, and requiring each a *note* by way of explanation. The drama demands that every thing be so instantaneously evident that he who runs may read; and the only impression effected by these *notes* to a play is, that the author is desirous of showing his reading.

We may mention, also, occasional tautologies—such as:

> Never did I behold thee so *attired*
> And *garmented* in beauty as to-night!

Or—

> What we need
> Is the celestial fire to change the fruit
> Into *transparent* crystal, *bright and clear!*

We may speak, too, of more than occasional errors of grammar. For example, page 23:

> Did no one see thee? None, my love, but *thou*.

Here, "but" is not a conjunction, but a preposition, and governs *thee* in the objective. "None but *thee*" would be right; meaning none *except* thee, *saving* thee. At page 27, "mayst" is somewhat incorrectly written "may'st." At page 34 we have:

> I have no other saint than *thou* to pray to.

Here, authority and analogy are both against Mr. Longfellow. "Than" also is here a preposition governing the objective, and meaning *save* or *except*. "I have none other God than thee," etc. See Horne Tooke. The Latin "*quam te*" is exactly equivalent. At page 80 we read:

> *Like thee* I am a captive, and *like thee*,
> I have a gentle gaoler.

Here, "like thee" (although grammatical of course) does not convey the idea. Mr. L. does not mean that the speaker is *like* the bird itself, but that his *condition* resembles it. The true reading would thus be:

> *As thou* I am a captive, and, *as thou*,
> I have a gentle gaoler.

That is to say, *as thou art*, and *as thou hast*.

Upon the whole, we regret that Professor Longfellow has written this work, and feel especially vexed that he has committed himself by its republication. Only when

regarded as a mere poem, can it be said to have merit of any kind. For, in fact, it is only when we separate the poem from the drama, that the passages we have commended as beautiful can be understood to have beauty. We are not too sure, indeed, that a "dramatic poem" is not a flat contradiction in terms. At all events a man of true genius (and such Mr. L. unquestionably is) has no business with these hybrid and paradoxical compositions. Let a poem be a poem only; let a play be a play and nothing more. As for "The Spanish Student," its thesis is unoriginal; its incidents are antique; its plot is no plot; its characters have no character; in short, it is little better than a play upon words, to style it "A Play" at all.

LONGFELLOW'S BALLADS.*

"IL *y à parier*," says Chamfort, "*que toute idée publique, toute convention reçue, est une sottise, car elle a convenue au plus grand nombre.*"—One would be safe in wagering that any given public idea is erroneous, for it has been yielded to the clamor of the majority; and this strictly philosophical, although somewhat French, assertion, has especial bearing upon the whole race of what are termed maxims and popular proverbs, nine tenths of which are the quintessence of folly. One of the most deplorably false of them is the antique adage, *De gustibus non est disputandum*—there should be no disputing about taste. Here the idea designed to be conveyed is that any one person has as just right to consider his own taste *the true*, as has any one other—that taste itself, in short, is an arbitrary something, amenable to no law, and measurable by no definite rules. It must be confessed, however, that the exceedingly vague and impotent treatises which are alone extant, have much to answer for as regards confirm-

* "Ballads and other Poems." By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, author of "Voices of the Night," "Hyperion," etc. Second edition. John Owen, Cambridge.

ing the general error. Not the least important service which, hereafter, mankind will owe to *Phrenology*, may, perhaps, be recognized in an analysis of the real principles, and a digest of the resulting laws of taste. These principles, in fact, are as clearly traceable, and these laws as readily susceptible of system as are any whatever.

In the meantime, the insane adage above mentioned is in no respect more generally, more stupidly, and more pertinaciously quoted than by the admirers of what is termed the "good old Pope," or the "good old Goldsmith school" of poetry, in reference to the bolder, more natural, and *more ideal* compositions of such authors as Coëtlogon and Lamartine * in France; Herder, Körner, and Uhland in Germany; Brun and Baggesen in Denmark; Bellman, Tegnér, and Nyberg † in Sweden; Keats, Shelly, Coleridge, and Tennyson in England; Lowell and Longfellow in America. "*De gustibus non*," say these "good-old-school" fellows; and we have no doubt that their mental translation of the phrase is—"We pity your taste—we pity everybody's taste but our own."

It is our purpose to controvert the popular idea that the poets just mentioned owe to novelty, to trickeries of expression, and to other meretricious effects, their appreciation by certain readers; to demonstrate (for the matter is susceptible of demonstration) that such poetry

* We allude here chiefly to the "David" of Coëtlogon, and *only* to the "Chûte d'un Ange" of Lamartine.

† C. Julia Nyberg, author of the "Dikter von Euphrosyne."

and *such alone* has fulfilled the legitimate office of the Muse,—has thoroughly satisfied an earnest and unquenchable desire existing in the heart of man.

This volume of ballads and tales includes, with several brief original pieces, a translation from the Swedish of Tegnér. In attempting (what never should be attempted) a literal version of both the words and the metre of this poem, Professor Longfellow has failed to do justice either to his author or himself. He has striven to do what no man ever did well, and what, from the nature of language itself, never *can* be done well. Unless, for example, we shall come to have an influx of *spondees* in our English tongue, it will always be impossible to construct an English hexameter. Our spondees, or, we should say, our spondaic words, are rare. In the Swedish they are nearly as abundant as in the Latin and Greek. We have only "*compound*," "*context*," "*footfall*," and a few other similar ones. This is the difficulty; and that it *is* so will become evident upon reading "The Children of the Lord's Supper," where the sole *readable* verses are those in which we meet with the rare spondaic dissyllables. We mean to say *readable as hexameters;* for many of them will read very well as mere English dactylics with certain irregularities.

Much as we admire the genius of Mr. Longfellow, we are fully sensible of his many errors of affectation and imitation. His artistic skill is great, and his ideality high. But his conception of the *aims* of poesy *is all wrong;* and

this we shall prove at some future day—to our own satisfaction, at least. His didactics are all *out of place*. He has written brilliant poems—by accident; that is to say, when permitting his genius to get the better of his conventional habit of thinking—a habit deduced from German study. We do not mean to say that a didactic moral may not be well made the *under-current* of a poetical thesis, but that it can never be well put so obtrusively forth as in the majority of his compositions. * * *

We have said that Mr. Longfellow's conception of the *aims* of poesy is erroneous; and that thus, laboring at a disadvantage, he does violent wrong to his own high powers; and now the question is, what *are* his ideas of the aims of the Muse, as we gather these ideas from the *general* tendency of his poems? It will be at once evident that, imbued with the peculiar spirit of German song (in pure conventionality) he regards the inculcation of a *moral* as essential. Here we find it necessary to repeat that we have reference only to the *general* tendency of his compositions; for there are some magnificent exceptions, where, as if by accident, he has permitted his genius to get the better of his conventional prejudice. But didacticism is the prevalent *tone* of his song. His invention, his imagery, his all, is made subservient to the elucidation of some one or more points (but rarely of more than one) which he looks upon as *truth*. And that this mode of procedure will find stern defenders should never excite surprise, so long as the world is full to overflowing with

cant and conventicles. There are men who will scramble on all fours through the muddiest sloughs of vice to pick up a single apple of virtue. There are things called men who, so long as the sun rolls, will greet with snuffing huzzas every figure that takes upon itself the semblance of truth, even although the figure, in itself only a "stuffed Paddy," be as much out of place as a toga on the statue of Washington, or out of season as rabbits in the days of the dog star. * * *

We say this with little fear of contradiction. Yet the spirit of our assertion must be more heeded than the letter. Mankind have *seemed* to define Poesy in a thousand, and in a thousand conflicting definitions. But the war is one only of words. Induction is as well applicable to this subject as to the most palpable and utilitarian; and by its sober processes we find that, in respect to compositions which have been really received as poems, the *imaginative*, or more popularly, the creative portions *alone* have insured them to be so received. Yet these works, on account of these portions, having once been so received and so named, it has happened, naturally and inevitably, that other portions totally unpoetic have not only come to be regarded by the popular voice as poetic, but have been made to serve as false standards of perfection, in the adjustment of other poetical claims. Whatever has been found in whatever has been received as a poem has been blindly regarded as *ex statû* poetic. And this is a species of gross error which scarcely could have made its way

into any less intangible topic. In fact, that license which appertains to the Muse herself, it has been thought decorous, if not sagacious, to indulge, in all examination of her character. * * *

Poesy is a response—unsatisfactory, it is true—but still in some measure a response, to a natural and irrepressible demand. Man being what he is, the time could never have been in which Poesy was not. Its first element is the thirst for supernal BEAUTY—a beauty which is not afforded the soul by any existing collocation of earth's forms—a beauty which, perhaps, *no possible* combination of these forms would fully produce. Its second element is the attempt to satisfy this thirst by *novel* combinations among those forms of beauty which already exist—or by novel combinations *of those combinations which our predecessors, toiling in chase of the same phantom, have already set in order*. We thus clearly deduce the *novelty*, the *originality*, the *invention*, the *imagination*, or lastly the *creation* of BEAUTY (for the terms as here employed are synonymous), as the essence of all Poesy. Nor is this idea so much at variance with ordinary opinion as, at first sight, it may appear. A multitude of antique dogmas on this topic will be found, when divested of extrinsic speculation, to be easily resoluble into the definition now proposed. We do nothing more than present tangibly the vague clouds of the world's idea. We recognize the idea itself floating, unsettled, indefinite, in every attempt which has yet been made to circumscribe the conception

of "Poesy" in words. A striking instance of this is observable in the fact that no definition exists, in which either "the beautiful," or some one of those qualities which we have above designated synonymously with "creation," has not been pointed out as the *chief* attribute of the Muse. "Invention," however, or "imagination," is by far more commonly insisted upon. The word ποιησις itself (creation) speaks volumes upon this point. Neither will it be amiss here to mention Count Biefeld's definition of poetry as "*L'art d'exprimer les pensées par la fiction.*" With this definition (of which the philosophy is profound to a certain extent) the German terms *Dichtkunst*, the art of fiction, and *Dichten*, to feign, which are used for "*poetry*" and "*to make verses*," are in full and remarkable accordance. It is, nevertheless, in the *combination* of the two omni-prevalent ideas that the novelty and, we believe, the force of our own proposition are to be found. * * *

The elements of that beauty which is felt in sound, *may be* the mutual or common heritage of Earth and Heaven. Contenting ourselves with the firm conviction, that Music (in its modifications of rhythm and rhyme) is of so vast a moment to Poesy, as *never* to be neglected by him who is truly poetical—is of so mighty a force in furthering the great aim intended, that he is mad who rejects its assistance—content with this idea we shall not pause to maintain its absolute essentiality, for the mere sake of rounding a definition. That our definition of poetry will necessarily exclude much of what, through a supine

toleration, has been hitherto ranked as poetical, is a matter which affords us not even momentary concern. We address but the thoughtful, and heed only their approval—with our own. If our suggestions are truthful, then "after many days" shall they be understood as truth, even though found in contradiction of *all* that has been hitherto so understood. If false, shall we not be the first to bid them die?

We would reject, of course, all such matters as "Armstrong on Health," a revolting production; Pope's "Essay on Man," which may well be content with the title of an "Essay on Rhyme"; "Hudibras" and other merely humorous pieces. We do not gainsay the peculiar merits of either of these latter compositions, but deny them the position held. In a notice of Brainard's Poems, we took occasion to show that the common use of a certain instrument (rhythm) had tended, more than aught else, to confound humorous verse with poetry. The observation is now recalled to corroborate what we have just said in respect to the vast effect or force of melody in itself—an effect which could elevate into even momentary confusion with the highest efforts of mind, compositions such as are the greater number of satires or burlesques. * * *

We have shown our ground of objection to the general *themes* of Professor Longfellow. In common with all who claim the sacred title of poet, he should limit his endeavors to the creation of novel moods of beauty, in form, in color, in sound, in sentiment; for over all this

wide range has the poetry of words dominion. To what the world terms *prose* may be safely and properly left all else. The artist who doubts of his thesis, may always resolve his doubt by the single question—"might not this matter be as well or better handled in *prose?*" If it *may*, then is it no subject for the Muse. In the general acceptation of the term *Beauty* we are content to rest; being careful only to suggest that, in our peculiar views, it must be understood as inclusive of *the sublime.*

Of the pieces which constitute the present volume, there are not more than one or two thoroughly fulfilling the ideas we have proposed; although the volume, as a whole, is by no means so chargeable with didacticism as Mr. Longfellow's previous book. We would mention as poems *nearly true*, "The Village Blacksmith"; "The Wreck of the Hesperus," and especially "The Skeleton in Armor." In the first-mentioned we have the *beauty* of simple-mindedness as a genuine thesis; and this thesis is inimitably handled until the concluding stanza, where the spirit of legitimate poesy is aggrieved in the pointed antithetical deduction of a *moral* from what has gone before. In "The Wreck of the Hesperus" we have the *beauty* of child-like confidence and innocence, with that of the father's stern courage and affection. But, with slight exception, those particulars of the storm here detailed are not poetic subjects. Their thrilling *horror* belongs to prose, in which it could be far more effectively discussed, as Professor Longfellow may assure himself at

any moment by experiment. There *are* points of a tempest which afford the loftiest and truest poetical themes —points in which pure beauty is found, or, better still, beauty heightened into the sublime, by terror. But when we read, among other similar things, that

> The salt sea was frozen on her breast,
> The salt tears in her eyes,

we feel, if not positive disgust, at least a chilling sense of the inappropriate. In "The Skeleton in Armor" we find a pure and perfect thesis artistically treated. We find the beauty of bold courage and self-confidence, of love and maiden devotion, of reckless adventure, and finally of life-contemning grief. Combined with all this, we have numerous *points* of beauty apparently insulated, but all aiding the main effect or impression. The heart is stirred, and the mind does not lament its mal-instruction. The metre is simple, sonorous, well-balanced, and fully adapted to the subject. Upon the whole, there are fewer truer poems than this. It has but one defect—an important one. The prose remarks prefacing the narrative are really *necessary*. But every work of art should contain within itself all that is requisite for its own comprehension. And this remark is especially true of the ballad. In poems of magnitude the mind of the reader is not, at all times, enabled to include, in one comprehensive survey, the proportions and proper adjustment of the whole. He is pleased, if at all, with particular passages; and the sum of his pleasure is compounded of the sums of the

pleasurable sentiments inspired by these individual passages in the progress of perusal. But, in pieces of less extent, the pleasure is *unique*, in the proper acceptation of this term—the understanding is employed, without difficulty, in the contemplation of the picture *as a whole*; and thus its effect will depend, in great measure, upon the perfection of its finish, upon the nice adaptation of its constituent parts, and, especially, upon what is rightly termed by Schlegel *the unity or totality of interest*. But the practice of prefixing explanatory passages is utterly at variance with such unity. By the prefix, we are either put in possession of the subject of the poem, or some hint, historic fact, or suggestion, is thereby afforded, not included in the body of the piece, which, without the hint, is incomprehensible. In the latter case, while perusing the poem, the reader must revert, in mind at least, to the prefix, for the necessary explanation. In the former, the poem being a mere paraphrase of the prefix, the interest is divided between the prefix and the paraphrase. In either instance the totality of effect is destroyed.

Of the other original poems in the volume before us, there is none in which the aim of instruction, or *truth*, has not been too obviously substituted for the legitimate aim, *beauty*. We have heretofore taken occasion to say that a didactic moral might be happily made the *under-current* of a poetical theme, and we have treated this point at length, in a review of Moore's "Alciphron"; but the

moral thus conveyed is invariably an ill effect when obtruding beyond the upper-current of the thesis itself. Perhaps the worst specimen of this obtrusion is given us by our poet in "Blind Bartimeus" and "The Goblet of Life," where it will be observed that the *sole* interest of the upper-current of meaning depends upon its relation or reference to the under. What we read upon the surface would be *vox et preterea nihil* in default of the moral beneath. The Greek *finales* of "Blind Bartimeus" are an affectation altogether inexcusable. What the small, second-hand, Gibbon-ish pedantry of Byron introduced, is unworthy the imitation of Longfellow.

Of the translations we scarcely think it necessary to speak at all. We regret that our poet will persist in busying himself about such matters. *His* time might be better employed in original conception. Most of these versions are marked with the error upon which we have commented. This error is, in fact, essentially Germanic. "The Luck of Edenhall," however, is a truly beautiful poem; and we say this with all that deference which the opinion of the *Democratic Review* demands. This composition appears to us *one of the very finest*. It has all the free, hearty, *obvious* movement of the true ballad-legend. The greatest force of language is combined in it with the richest imagination, acting in its most legitimate province. Upon the whole, we prefer it even to the "Sword-Song" of Körner. The pointed moral with which it terminates is so exceedingly natural—so per-

fectly fluent from the incidents—that we have hardly heart to pronounce it in ill taste. We may observe of this ballad, in conclusion, that its subject is more *physical* than is usual in Germany. Its images are rich rather in physical than in moral beauty. And this tendency in Song is the true one. It is chiefly, if we are not mistaken, —it is chiefly amid forms of physical loveliness (we use the word *forms* in its widest sense as embracing modifications of sound and color) that the soul seeks the realization of its dreams of BEAUTY. It is to her demand in this sense especially, that the poet, who is wise, will most frequently and most earnestly respond.

"The Children of the Lord's Supper" is, beyond doubt, a true and most beautiful poem in great part, while, in some particulars, it is too metaphysical to have any pretension to the name. We have already objected, briefly, to its metre—the ordinary Latin or Greek hexameter—dactyls and spondees at random, with a spondee in conclusion. We maintain that the hexameter can never be introduced into our language, from the nature of that language itself. This rhythm demands, *for English ears*, a preponderance of natural spondees. Our tongue has few. Not only does the Latin and Greek, with the Swedish, and some others, abound in them; but the Greek and Roman ear had become reconciled (why or how is unknown) to the reception of artificial spondees—that is to say, spondaic words formed partly of one word and partly of another, or from an excised part of one

word. In short, the ancients were content to read *as they scanned*, or nearly so. It may be safely prophesied that we shall never do this; and thus we shall never admit English hexameters. The attempt to introduce them, after the repeated failures of Sir Philip Sidney, and others, is, perhaps, somewhat discreditable to the scholarship of Professor Longfellow. The *Democratic Review*, in saying that he has triumphed over difficulties in this rhythm, has been deceived, it is evident, by the facility with which some of these verses may be read. In glancing over the poem, we do not observe a single verse which can be read, *to English ears, as a Greek hexameter.* There are many, however, which can be well read as mere English dactylic verses; such, for example, as the well-known lines of Byron, commencing

Know ye the | land where the | cypress and | myrtle.

These lines (although full of irregularities) are, in their perfection, formed of three dactyls and a cæsura—just as if we should cut short the initial verse of the Bucolics thus:

Tityre | tu patu | læ recu | bans—

The "myrtle," at the close of Byron's line, is a double rhyme, and must be understood as one syllable.

Now a great number of Professor Longfellow's hexameters are merely these dactylic lines, *continued for two feet.* For example:

Whispered the | race of the | flowers and | merry on | balancing | branches.

In this example, also, "branches," which is a double ending, must be regarded as the cæsura, or one syllable, of which alone it has the force.

As we have already alluded, in one or two regards, to a notice of these poems which appeared in the *Democratic Review*, we may as well here proceed with some few further comments upon the article in question—with whose general tenor we are happy to agree.

The *Review* speaks of "Maidenhood" as a poem, "not to be understood but at the expense of more time and trouble than a song can justly claim." We are scarcely less surprised at this opinion from Mr. Langtree than we were at the condemnation of "The Luck of Edenhall."

"Maidenhood" is faulty, it appears to us, only on the score of its theme, which is somewhat didactic. Its *meaning* seems simplicity itself. A maiden on the verge of womanhood, hesitating to enjoy life (for which she has a strong appetite) through a false idea of duty, is bidden to fear nothing, having purity of heart as her lion of Una.

What Mr. Langtree styles "an unfortunate peculiarity" in Mr. Longfellow, resulting from "adherence to a false system" has really been always regarded by us as one of his idiosyncratic merits. "In each poem," says the critic, "he has but *one* idea, which, in the progress of his song, is gradually unfolded, and at last reaches its full development in the concluding lines; this singleness of thought might lead a harsh critic to suspect intellectual barrenness." It leads *us*, individually, only to a full sense

of the artistical power and knowledge of the poet. We confess that now, for the first time, we hear unity of conception objected to as a defect. But Mr. Langtree seems to have fallen into the singular error of supposing the poet to have absolutely *but one idea* in each of his ballads. Yet how "one idea" can be "gradually unfolded" without other ideas, is, to us, a mystery of mysteries. Mr. Longfellow, very properly, has but one *leading* idea which forms the basis of his poem; but to the aid and development of this one there are innumerable others, of which the rare excellence is, that all are in keeping, that none could be well omitted, that each tends to the one general effect. It is unnecessary to say another word upon this topic.

In speaking of "Excelsior," Mr. Langtree (are we wrong in attributing the notice to his very forcible pen?) seems to labor under some similar misconception. "It carries along with it," says he, "a false moral which greatly diminishes its merit in our eyes. The great merit of a picture, whether made with the pencil or pen, is its *truth;* and this merit does not belong to Mr. Longfellow's sketch. Men of genius may, and probably do, meet with greater difficulties in their struggles with the world than their fellow-men who are less highly gifted; but their power of overcoming obstacles is proportionably greater, and the result of their laborious suffering is not death but immortality."

That the chief merit of a picture is its *truth*, is an asser-

tion deplorably erroneous. Even in Painting, which is, more essentially than Poesy, a mimetic art, the proposition cannot be sustained. Truth is not even *the aim.* Indeed, it is curious to observe how very slight a degree of truth is sufficient to satisfy the mind, which acquiesces in the absence of numerous essentials in the thing depicted. An outline frequently stirs the spirit more pleasantly than the most elaborate picture. We need only refer to the compositions of Flaxman and of Retzch. Here all details are omitted—nothing can be further from *truth.* Without even color the most thrilling effects are produced. In statues we are rather pleased than disgusted with *the want of the eyeball.* The hair of the Venus de Medicis *was gilded.* Truth indeed! The grapes of Zeuxis as well as the curtain of Parrhasius were received as indisputable evidence of the truthful ability of these artists—but they were not even *classed among their pictures.* If truth is the highest aim of either Painting or Poesy, then Jan Steen was a greater artist than Angelo, and Crabbe is a more noble poet than Milton.

But we have not quoted the observation of Mr. Langtree to deny its philosophy; our design was simply to show that he has misunderstood the poet. "Excelsior" has not even a remote tendency to the interpretation assigned it by the critic. It depicts the *earnest upward impulse of the soul*—an impulse not to be subdued even in death. Despising danger, resisting pleasure, the youth, bearing the banner inscribed "*Excelsior!*" (higher still!)

struggles through all difficulties to an Alpine summit. Warned to be content with the elevation attained, his cry is still "*Excelsior!*" and, even in falling dead on the highest pinnacle, his cry is *still* "*Excelsior!*" There is yet an immortal height to be surmounted—an ascent in Eternity. The poet holds in view the idea of never-ending *progress*. That he is misunderstood is rather the misfortune of Mr. Langtree than the fault of Mr. Longfellow. There is an old adage about the difficulty of one's furnishing an auditor with matter to be comprehended and brains for its comprehension.

FANCY AND IMAGINATION.

DRAKE'S "CULPRIT FAY" AND MOORE'S "ALCIPHRON."*

AMID the vague mythology of Egypt, the voluptuous scenery of her Nile, and the gigantic mysteries of her pyramids, Anacreon Moore has found all of that striking *material* which he so much delights in working up, and which he has embodied in the poem before us. The design of the story (for plot it has none) has been a less consideration than its facilities, and is made subservient to its execution. The subject is comprised in five epistles. In the first, Alciphron, the head of the Epicurean sect at Athens, writes, from Alexandria, to his friend Cleon, in the former city. He tells him (assigning a reason for quitting Athens and her pleasures) that, having fallen asleep one night after protracted festivity, he beholds, in a dream, a spectre, who tells him, that beside the sacred Nile, he, the Epicurean, shall find that Eternal Life for which he had so long been sighing. In the second, from the same to the same, the traveller

* "Alciphron," a Poem. By Thomas Moore, Esq., author of "Lalla Rookh," etc., etc. Carey and Hart, Philadelphia.

speaks, at large and in rapturous terms, of the scenery of Egypt, of the beauty of her maidens, of an approaching Festival of the Moon, and of a wild hope entertained that amid the subterraneous chambers of some huge pyramid lies the secret which he covets, the secret of Life Eternal. In the third letter, he relates a love adventure at the Festival. Fascinated by the charms of one of the nymphs of a procession, he is first in despair at losing sight of her, then overjoyed at again seeing her in Necropolis, and finally traces her steps until they are lost near one of the smaller pyramids. In epistle the fourth, (still from the same to the same,) he enters and explores the pyamid, and, passing through a complete series of Eleusinian mysteries, is at length successfully initiated into the secrets of Memphian priestcraft; we learning this latter point from letter the fifth, which concludes the poem, and is addressed by Orcus, high-priest of Memphis, to Decius, a prætorian prefect.

A new poem from Moore calls to mind that critical opinion respecting him which had its origin, we believe, in the dogmatism of Coleridge—we mean the opinion that he is essentially the poet of *fancy*—the term being embloyed in contradistinction to *imagination*. "The fancy," says the author of "The Ancient Mariner," in his *Biographia Literaria*, "the fancy combines, the imagination creates." And this was intended, and has been received, as a distinction. If so at all, it is one without a difference; without even a difference of *degree*. The fancy

as nearly creates as the imagination; and neither creates in any respect. All novel conceptions are merely unusual combinations. The mind of man can *imagine* nothing which has not really existed; and this point is susceptible of the most positive demonstration—see the Baron de Bielfeld, in his *Premiers Traits de l'Erudition Universelle*, 1767. It will be said, perhaps, that we can imagine a *griffin*, and that a griffin does not exist. Not the griffin, certainly, but its component parts. It is a mere compendium of known limbs and features—of known qualities. Thus with all which seems to be *new*—which appears to be a *creation* of intellect, it is resoluble into the old. The wildest and most vigorous effort of mind cannot stand the test of this analysis.

We might make a distinction, *of degree*, between the fancy and the imagination, in saying that the latter is the former *loftily employed*. But experience proves this distinction to be unsatisfactory. What we *feel* and *know* to be fancy, will be found still only *fanciful*, whatever be the theme which engages it. It retains its idiosyncrasy under all circumstances. No *subject* exalts it into the ideal. We might exemplify this by reference to the writings of one whom our patriotism, rather than our judgment, has elevated to a niche in the poetic temple which he does not becomingly fill, and which he cannot long uninterruptedly hold. We allude to the late Dr. Rodman Drake, whose puerile abortion, "The Culprit Fay," we examined, at some length, in a *critique* else-

where; proving it, we think, beyond all question, to belong to that class of the pseudo-ideal, in dealing with which we find ourselves embarrassed between a kind of half-consciousness that we ought to admire, and the certainty that we do not. Dr. Drake was employed upon a good subject—at least it is a subject precisely identical with those which Shakespeare was wont so happily to treat, and in which, especially, the author of "Lilian" has so wonderfully succeeded. But the American has brought to his task a mere *fancy*, and has grossly failed in doing what many suppose him to have done—in writing an ideal or imaginative poem. There is not one particle of the true ποιησις about "The Culprit Fay." We say that the subject, even at its best points, did not aid Dr. Drake in the slightest degree. He was never more than *fanciful*. The passage, for example, chiefly cited by his admirers, is the account of the "Sylphid Queen"; and to show the difference between the false and the true ideal, we collated, in the review just alluded to, this, the most admired passage, with one upon a similar topic by Shelley. We shall be pardoned for repeating here, as nearly as we remember them, some words of what we then said.

The description of the Sylphid Queen runs thus:

> But oh, how fair the shape that lay
> Beneath a rainbow bending bright;
> She seemed to the entrancéd Fay,
> The loveliest of the forms of light;
> Her mantle was the purple rolled
> At twilight in the west afar;
> 'T was tied with threads of dawning gold,

And buttoned with a sparkling star.
Her face was like the lily roon
That veils the vestal planet's hue;
Her eyes two beamlets from the moon
Set floating in the welkin blue.
Her hair is like the sunny beam,
And the diamond gems which round it gleam
Are the pure drops of dewy even
That ne'er have left their native heaven.

In the "Queen Mab" of Shelley, a fairy is thus introduced:

Those who had looked upon the sight,
Passing all human glory,
Saw not the yellow moon,
Saw not the mortal scene.
Heard not the night-wind's rush,
Heard not an earthly sound,
Saw but the fairy pageant,
Heard but the heavenly strains
That filled the lonely dwelling—

And thus described:

The fairy's frame was slight; yon fibrous cloud
That catches but the palest tinge of even,
And which the straining eye can hardly seize
When melting into eastern twilight's shadow,
Were scarce so thin, so slight; but the fair star
That gems the glittering coronet of morn,
Sheds not a light so mild, so powerful,
As that which, bursting from the fairy's form,
Spread a purpureal halo round the scene,
Yet with an undulating motion,
Swayed to her outline gracefully.

In these exquisite lines the faculty of mere comparison is but little exercised—that of ideality in a wonderful degree. It is probable that in a similar case Dr. Drake

would have formed the face of the fairy of the "fibrous cloud," her arms of the "pale tinge of even," her eyes of the "fair stars," and her body of the "twilight shadow." Having so done, his admirers would have congratulated him upon his *imagination*, not taking the trouble to think that they themselves could at any moment *imagine* a fairy of materials equally as good, and conveying an equally distinct idea. Their mistake would be precisely analogous to that of many a school-boy who admires the imagination displayed in "Jack the Giant-Killer," and is finally rejoiced at discovering his own imagination to surpass that of the author, since the monsters destroyed by Jack are only about forty feet in height, and he himself has no trouble in imagining some of one hundred and forty. It will be seen that the fairy of Shelley is not a mere compound of incongruous natural objects, inartificially put together, and unaccompanied by any *moral* sentiment—but a being, in the illustration of whose nature some physical elements are used collaterally as adjuncts, while the main conception springs immediately, *or thus apparently springs*, from the brain of the poet, enveloped in the moral sentiments of grace, of color, of motion—of the beautiful, of the *mystical*, of the august—in short, of the ideal.

The truth is, that the just distinction between the fancy and the imagination (and which is still but a distinction *of degree*) is involved in the consideration of the *mystic*. We give this as an idea of our own altogether.

We have no authority for our opinion—but do not the less firmly hold it. The term *mystic* is here employed in the sense of Augustus William Schlegel, and of most other German critics. It is applied by them to that class of composition in which there lies beneath the transparent upper-current of meaning an under or *suggestive* one. What we vaguely term the *moral* of any sentiment is its mystic or secondary expression. It has the vast force of an accompaniment in music. This vivifies the air; that spiritualizes the *fanciful* conception, and lifts it into the *ideal.*

This theory will bear, we think, the most rigorous tests which can be made applicable to it, and will be acknowledged as tenable by all who are themselves imaginative. If we carefully examine those poems, or portions of poems, or those prose romances, which mankind have been accustomed to designate as *imaginative* (for an instinctive feeling leads us to employ properly the term whose full import we have still never been able to define), it will be seen that all so designated are remarkable for the *suggestive* character which we have discussed. They are strongly *mystic*—in the proper sense of the word. We will here only call to the reader's mind the "Prometheus Vinctus" of Æschylus; the "Inferno" of Dante; the "Destruction of Numantia" by Cervantes; the "Comus" of Milton; the "Ancient Mariner," the "Christabel," and the "Kubla Khan," of Coleridge; the "Nightingale" of Keats; and, most especially, the "Sen-

sitive Plant" of Shelley, and the "Undine" of De la Motte Fouqué. These two latter poems (for we call them both such) are the finest possible examples of the purely *ideal*. There is little of fancy here, and every thing of imagination. With each note of the lyre is heard a ghostly, and not always a distinct, but an august and soul-exalting, *echo*. In every glimpse of beauty presented, we catch, through long and wild vistas, dim bewildering visions of a far more ethereal beauty *beyond*. But not so in poems which the world has always persisted in terming *fanciful*. Here the upper-current is often exceedingly brilliant and beautiful; but then men *feel* that this upper-current *is all*. No Naiad voice addresses them *from below*. The notes of the air of the song do not tremble with the according tones of the accompaniment.

It is the failure to perceive these truths which has occasioned the embarrassment experienced by our critics while discussing the topic of Moore's station in the poetic world—that hesitation with which we are obliged to refuse him the loftiest rank among the most noble. The popular voice, and the popular heart have denied him that happiest quality, imagination—and here the popular voice (*because* for once it is gone with the popular heart) is right—but yet only relatively so. Imagination is not the leading feature of the poetry of Moore; but he possesses it in no little degree.

We will quote a few instances from the poem now before us—instances which will serve to exemplify the distinctive feature which we have attributed to ideality.

It is the *suggestive* force which exalts and etherealizes the passages we copy.

Or is it that there lurks, indeed,
Some truth in man's prevailing creed,
And that our guardians from on high,
Come, in that pause from toil and sin,
To put the senses' curtain by,
And on the wakeful soul look in!

Again—

The eternal pyramids of Memphis burst
Awfully on my sight—standing sublime
'Twixt earth and heaven, the watch-towers of time,
From whose lone summit, when his reign hath past
From earth forever, he will look his last.

And again—

Is there for man no hope—but this which dooms
His only lasting trophies to be tombs!
But 't is not so—earth, heaven, all nature shows
He *may* become immortal, *may* unclose
The wings within him wrapt, and proudly rise
Redeemed from earth a creature of the skies!

And here—

The pyramid shadows, stretching from the light,
Look like the first colossal steps of night,
Stalking across the valley to invade
The distant hills of porphyry with their shade!

And once more—

There Silence, thoughtful God, who loves
The neighborhood of Death, in groves
Of asphodel lies hid, and weaves
His hushing spell among the leaves.

Such lines as these, we must admit, however, are not of frequent occurrence in the poem—the sum of whose great beauty is composed of the several sums of a world of minor excellences.

Moore has always been renowned for the number and appositeness, as well as novelty, of his similes; and the renown thus acquired is strongly indicial of his deficiency in that nobler merit—the noblest of them all. No poet thus distinguished was ever richly ideal. Pope and Cowper are remarkable instances in point. Similes (so much insisted upon by the critics of the reign of Queen Anne) are never, in our opinion, strictly in good taste, whatever may be said to the contrary, and certainly can never be made to accord with other high qualities, except when naturally arising from the subject in the way of illustration—and, when thus arising, they have seldom the merit of novelty. To be novel, they must fail in essential particulars. The higher minds will avoid their frequent use. They form no portion of the ideal, and appertain to the fancy alone.

We proceed with a few random observations upon "Alciphron." The poem is distinguished throughout by a very happy facility which has never been mentioned in connection with its author, but which has much to do with the reputation he has obtained. We allude to the facility with which he recounts a poetical story in a *prosaic* way. By this is meant that he preserves the tone and method of arrangement of a prose relation, and thus obtains great advantages over his more stilted compeers. His has no poetical *style* (such, for example, as the French have—a distinct style for a distinct purpose), but an easy and ordinary prose manner, *ornamented into poetry*. By means

of this he is enabled to enter, with ease, into details which would baffle any other versifier of the age, and at which Lamartine would stand aghast. For any thing that we see to the contrary, Moore might solve a cubic equation in verse. His facility in this respect is truly admirable, and is, no doubt, the result of long practice after mature deliberation. We refer the reader to page 50 of the pamphlet now reviewed, where the minute and conflicting incidents of the descent into the pyramid are detailed with absolutely *more* precision than we have ever known a similar relation detailed with in prose.

In general dexterity and melody of versification the author of "Lalla Rookh" is unrivalled; but he is by no means at all times accurate, falling occasionally into the common foible of throwing accent upon syllables too unimportant to sustain it. Thus, in the lines which follow, where we have italicized the weak syllables:

> And mark 't is nigh; already *the* sun bids. * * *
> While hark from all the temples *a* rich swell. * * *
> I rushed in*to* the cool night air.

He also too frequently draws out the word heaven into two syllables—a protraction which it *never* will support.

His English is now and then objectionable, as, at page 26, where he speaks of

> Lighted barks
> That down Syene's cataract *shoots*,

making *shoots* rhyme with flutes, below; also, at page 6, and elsewhere, where the word *none* has improperly a

singular, instead of a plural force. But such criticism as this is somewhat captious, for in general he is most highly polished.

At page 27, he has stolen his "woven snow" from the *ventum textilem* of Apuleius.

At page 8, he either himself has misunderstood the tenets of Epicurus, or wilfully misrepresents them through the voice of Alciphron. We incline to the former idea, however; as the philosophy of that most noble of the sophists is habitually perverted by the moderns. Nothing could be more spiritual and less sensual than the doctrines we so torture into wrong. But we have drawn out this notice at somewhat too great length, and must conclude. In truth, the exceeding beauty of "Alciphron" has bewildered and detained us. We could not point out a poem in any language which, as a whole, greatly excels it. It is far superior to "Lalla Rookh." While Moore does not reach, except in rare snatches, the height of the loftiest qualities of some whom we have named, yet he has written finer poems than any, of equal length, by the greatest of his rivals. His radiance, not always as bright as some flashes from other pens, is yet a radiance of equable glow, whose total amount of light exceeds, by very much, we think, that total amount in the case of any cotemporary writer whatsoever. A vivid fancy; an epigrammatic spirit; a fine taste; vivacity, dexterity, and a musical ear, have made him very easily what he is, the most popular poet now living—if not the most pop-

ular that ever lived,—and, perhaps, a slight modification at birth of that which phrenologists have agreed to term *temperament*, might have made him the truest and noblest votary of the Muse of any age or clime. As it is, we have only casual glimpses of that *mens divinior* which is assuredly enshrined within him.

E. P. WHIPPLE AND OTHER CRITICS.

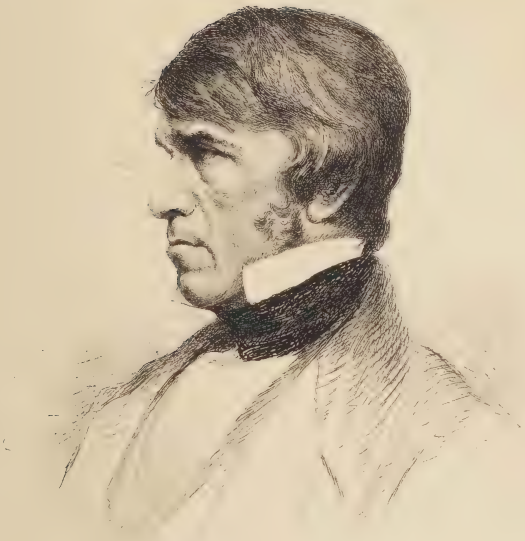
OUR most analytic, if not altogether our best, critic (Mr. Whipple, perhaps, excepted) is Mr. *William A. Jones*, author of "The Analyst." How he would write elaborate criticisms I cannot say; but his summary judgments of authors are, in general, discriminative and profound. In fact, his papers on "Emerson" and on "Macaulay," published in *Arcturus*, are better than merely "profound," if we take the word in its now desecrated sense; for they are at once pointed, lucid, and just,—as summaries, leaving nothing to be desired.

Mr. Whipple has less analysis, and far less candor, as his depreciation of "Jane Eyre" will show; but he excels Mr. Jones in sensibility to beauty, and is thus the better critic of poetry. I have read nothing finer in its way than his eulogy on Tennyson. I say "eulogy," for the essay in question is unhappily little more; and Mr. Whipple's paper on Miss Barrett was *nothing* more. He has less discrimination than Mr. Jones, and a more obtuse sense of the critical office. In fact, he has been infected with that unmeaning and transparent heresy—the cant of criti-

cal Boswellism, by dint of which we are to shut our eyes tightly to all autorial blemishes, and open them, like owls, to all autorial merits. Papers thus composed may be good in their way, just as an impertinent *cicerone* is good in *his* way; and the way, in either case, may still be a small one.

Boccalini, in his "Advertisements from Parnassus," tells us that Zoilus once presented Apollo with a very caustic review of a very admirable poem. The god asked to be shown the beauties of the work; but the critic replied that he troubled himself only about the errors. Hereupon Apollo gave him a sack of unwinnowed wheat—bidding him pick out all the chaff for his pains.

Now this fable does very well as a hit at the critics; but I am by no means sure that the deity was in the right. The fact is, that the limits of the strict critical duty are grossly misapprehended. We may go so far as to say that, while the critic is *permitted* to play, at times, the part of the mere commentator—while he is *allowed*, by way of merely *interesting* his readers, to put in the fairest light the merits of his author—his *legitimate* task is still, in pointing out and analyzing defects and showing how the work might have been improved, to aid the general cause of Letters, without undue heed of the individual literary men. Beauty, to be brief, should be considered in the light of an axiom, which, to become at once evident, needs only to be distinctly *put*. It is *not* Beauty, if it require to be demonstrated as such;—and thus to



point out too particularly the merits of a work, is to admit that they are *not* merits altogether.

When I say that both Mr. Jones and Mr. Whipple are, in some degree, imitators of Macaulay, I have no design that my words should be understood as disparagement. The style and general conduct of Macaulay's critical papers could scarcely be improved. To call his manner "conventional," is to do it gross injustice. The manner of Carlyle *is* conventional—with himself. The style of Emerson is conventional—with himself *and* Carlyle. The style of Miss Fuller is conventional—with herself and *Emerson* and Carlyle,—that is to say, it is a triple-distilled conventionality;—and by the word "conventionality," as here used, I mean very nearly what, as regards personal conduct, we style "affectation,"—that is, an assumption of airs or *tricks* which have no basis in reason or common-sense. The quips, quirks, and curt oracularities of the Emersons, Alcots, and Fullers, are simply Lily's euphuisms revived. Very different, indeed, are the *peculiarities* of Macaulay. He has his mannerisms; but we see that, by dint of them, he is enabled to accomplish the extremes of unquestionable excellences—the extreme of clearness, of vigor (dependent upon clearness), of grace, and very especially of thoroughness. For his short sentences, for his antitheses, for his modulations, for his climaxes,—for every thing that he does,—a very slight analysis suffices to show a distinct reason. His manner, thus, is simply the perfection of that justifiable rhetoric which has its basis in

common-sense; and to say that such rhetoric is never called in to the aid of *genius*, is simply to disparage genius, and by no means to discredit the rhetoric. It is nonsense to assert that the highest genius would not be benefited by attention to its modes of manifestation—by availing itself of that Natural Art which it too frequently despises. Is it not evident that the more intrinsically valuable the rough diamond, the more gain accrues to it from polish?

Now, since it would be nearly impossible to vary the rhetoric of Macaulay, in any material degree, without deterioration in the *essential* particulars of clearness, vigor, etc., those who write *after* Macaulay have to choose between the two horns of a dilemma: they must be weak and original, or imitative and strong; and since imitation, in a case of this kind, is merely adherence to *Truth* and *Reason* as pointed out by one who feels their value, the author who should forego the advantages of the "imitation" for the mere sake of being erroneously original, "*n'est pas si sage qu'il croit.*"

The true course to be pursued by our critics—justly sensible of Macaulay's excellences—is *not*, however, to be content with tamely following in his footsteps, but to outstrip him in his own path—a path not so much his as Nature's. We must not fall into the error of fancying that he is *perfect* merely because he excels (in point of style) all his British cotemporaries. Some such idea as this seems to have taken possession of Mr. Jones when he says:

"Macaulay's style is admirable—full of color, perfectly clear, free from all obstructions, exactly English, and as pointedly antithetical as possible. We have marked two passages on Southey and Byron, so happy *as to defy improvement.* The one is a sharp epigrammatic paragraph on Southey's political bias:

"'Government is to Mr. Southey one of the fine arts. He judges of a theory or a public measure, of a religion, a political party, a peace or a war, as men judge of a picture or a statue, by the effect produced on his imagination. A chain of associations is to him what a chain of reasoning is to other men; and what he calls his opinions are, in fact, merely his tastes.'

"The other a balanced character of Lord Byron:

"'In the rank of Lord Byron, in his understanding, in his character, in his very person, there was a strange union of opposite extremes. He was born to all that men covet and admire. But in every one of those eminent advantages which he possessed over others, there was mingled something of misery and debasement. He was sprung from a house, ancient, indeed, and noble, but degraded and impoverished by a series of crimes and follies, which had attained a scandalous publicity. The kinsman whom he succeeded had died poor, and but for merciful judges, would have died upon the gallows. The young peer had great intellectual powers; yet there was an unsound part in his mind. He had naturally a generous and tender heart; but his temper was wayward and irritable. He had a

head which statuaries loved to copy, and a foot the deformity of which the beggars in the street mimicked.' "

Let us now look at the first of these paragraphs. The opening sentence is inaccurate at all points. The word "government" does not give the author's idea with sufficient definitiveness; for the term is *more* frequently applied to the *system* by which the affairs of a nation are regulated than to the act of regulating. "The government," we say, for example, "does so and so"—meaning those who govern. But Macaulay intends simply the act or acts called "governing," and this word should have been used, as a matter of course. The "Mr." prefixed to "Southey," is superfluous, for no sneer is designed; and in *mistering* a well-known author, we hint that he is not entitled to that exemption which we accord to Homer, Dante, or Shakespeare. "*To* Mr. Southey" would have been right, had the succeeding words been "government *seems* one of the fine arts"; but, as the sentence stands, "*With* Mr. Southey" is demanded. "Southey," too, being the principal subject of the paragraph, should precede "government," which is mentioned only in its relation to Southey. "One of the fine arts" is pleonastic, since the phrase conveys nothing more than "a fine art" would convey.

The second sentence is quite as faulty. Here Southey loses his precedence as the subject; and thus the "He" should follow "a theory," "a public measure," etc. By "religion" is meant a "*creed*"; this latter word should therefore be

used. The conclusion of the sentence is very awkward. Southey is said to judge of a peace or a war, etc., as men judge of a picture or a statue, and the words which succeed are intended to explain *how* men judge of a picture or a statue. These words should, therefore, run thus: "by the effect produced on *their* imaginations." "Produced," moreover, is neither so exact nor so "English" as "wrought." In saying that Southey judges of a political party, etc., as *men* judge of a picture, etc., Southey is quite excluded from the category of "men." "*Other* men," was no doubt originally written, but "other" erased, on account of the "other men" occurring in the sentence below.

Coming to the last, we find that "a chain of associations" is not properly paralleled by "a chain of reasoning." We must say either "a chain of association," to meet the "reasoning," or "a chain of reasons," to meet the "associations." The repetition of "what" is awkward and unpleasant. The entire paragraph should be thus remodelled:

"With Southey, governing is a fine art. Of a theory or a public measure—of a creed, a political party, a peace or a war—he judges by the imaginative effect; as only such things as pictures or statues are judged of by other men. What to them a chain of reasoning is, to him is a chain of association; and, as to his opinions, they are nothing but his tastes."

The blemishes in the paragraph about Byron are more

negative than those in the paragraph about Southey. The first sentence needs vivacity. The adjective "opposite" is superfluous; so is the particle "there." The second and third sentences are, properly, one. "Some" would fully supply the place of "something of." The whole phrase "which he possessed over others," is supererogatory. "Was sprung," in place of "sprang," is altogether unjustifiable. The triple repetition of "and," in the fourth sentence, is awkward. "Notorious crimes and follies," would express all that is implied in "crimes and follies which had attained a scandalous publicity." The fifth sentence might be well curtailed; and as it stands, has an unintentional and unpleasant sneer. "Intellect" would do as well as "intellectual powers"; and this (the sixth) sentence might otherwise be shortened advantageously. The whole paragraph, in my opinion, would be better thus expressed:

"In Lord Byron's rank, understanding, character,—even in person,—we find a strange union of extremes. Whatever men covet and admire, became his by right of birth; yet debasement and misery were mingled with each of his eminent advantages. He sprang from a house, ancient, it is true, and noble, but degraded and impoverished by a series of notorious crimes. But for merciful judges, the pauper kinsman whom he succeded would have been hanged. The young peer had an intellect great, perhaps, yet partially unsound. His heart was generous, but his temper wayward; and while statuaries copied his head, beggars mimicked the deformity of his foot."

In these remarks, my object is not so much to point out inaccuracies in the most accurate stylist of his age, as to hint that our critics might surpass him on his own ground, and yet leave themselves something to learn in the moralities of manner.

Nothing can be plainer than that our position, as a literary colony of Great Britain, leads us into wronging, indirectly, our own authors by exaggerating the merits of those across the water. Our most reliable critics extol—and extol without discrimination—such English compositions as, if written in America, would be either passed over without notice or unscrupulously condemned. Mr. Whipple, for example, whom I have mentioned in this connection with Mr. Jones, is decidedly one of our most "reliable" critics. His honesty I dispute as little as I doubt his courage or his talents—but here is an instance of the want of common discrimination into which he is occasionally hurried, by undue reverence for British intellect and British opinion. In a review of "The Drama of Exile, and other Poems," by Miss Barrett (now Mrs. Browning), he speaks of the following passage as "in every respect faultless—sublime":

> Hear the steep generations how they fall
> Adown the visionary stairs of Time,
> Like supernatural thunders—far yet near,
> Sowing their fiery echoes through the hills!

Now here, saying nothing of the affectation in "adown"; not alluding to the insoluble paradox of "far yet near";

not mentioning the inconsistent metaphor involved in the sowing of fiery echoes; adverting but slightly to the misusage of "like" in place of "as"; and to the impropriety of making any thing fall like *thunder*, which has never been known to fall at all; merely hinting, too, at the misapplication of "steep" to the "generations" instead of to the "stairs" (a perversion in no degree justified by the fact that so preposterous a figure as *synecdoche* exists in the school-books);—letting these things pass, we shall still find it difficult to understand how Mrs. Browning should have been led to think that the principal idea itself—the abstract idea—the idea of *tumbling down stairs*, in any shape, or under any circumstances—either a poetical or a decorous conception. And yet Mr. Whipples speaks of it as "sublime." That the lines narrowly *missed* sublimity, I grant; that they came within a step of it, I admit; but, unhappily, the step is that *one* step which, time out of mind, has intervened between the sublime and the ridiculous. So true is this that any person—that even I—with a very partial modification of the imagery—a modification that shall not interfere with its richly spiritual *tone*—may elevate the passage into unexceptionability. For example:

> Hear the far generations—how they crash
> From crag to crag down the precipitous Time,
> In multitudinous thunders that upstartle
> Aghast, the echoes from their cavernous lairs
> In the visionary hills!

No doubt my version has its faults; but it has at least

the merit of consistency. Not only is a mountain more poetical than a pair of stairs, but echoes are more appropriately typified as wild beasts than as seeds; and echoes and wild beasts agree better with a mountain than does a pair of stairs with the *sowing* of seeds—even admitting that these seeds be seeds of fire, and be sown broadcast "among the hills" by a steep generation while in the act of tumbling down the stairs—that is to say, of coming down the stairs in too great a hurry to be capable of sowing the seeds accurately, as all seeds should be sown;—nor is the matter rendered any better for Mrs. Browning, even if the construction of her sentence be understood as implying that the fiery seeds were sown, not immediately by the steep generations that tumbled down the stairs, but mediately, through the intervention of the "supernatural thunders" that were *occasioned* by the steep generations that were so unlucky as to tumble down the stairs.

J. FENIMORE COOPER.

"WYANDOTTÉ; or, The Hutted Knoll," is, in its general features, precisely similar to the novels enumerated in the title.* It is a forest subject; and, when we say this, we give assurance that the story is a good one; for Mr. Cooper has never been known to fail, either in the forest or upon the sea. The interest, as usual, has no reference to *plot*, of which, indeed, our novelist seems altogether regardless, or incapable, but depends, first, upon the nature of the theme; secondly, upon a Robinson-Crusoe-like detail in its management; and thirdly, upon the frequently repeated portraiture of the half-civilized Indian. In saying that the interest depends, *first*, upon the nature of the theme, we mean to suggest that this theme—life in the wilderness—is one of intrinsic and universal interest, appealing to the heart of man in all phases; a theme, like that of life upon the ocean, so unfailingly omni-prevalent in its power of arresting and absorbing attention, that while success or

* "Wyandotté; or, The Hutted Knoll." A tale, by the author of "The Pathfinder," "Deerslayer," "Last of the Mohicans," "Pioneers," "Prairie," etc., etc. Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard.

popularity is, with such a subject, expected as a matter of course, a failure might be properly regarded as conclusive evidence of imbecility on the part of the author. The two theses in question have been handled *usque ad nauseam*—and this through the instinctive perception of the universal interest which appertains to them. A writer, distrustful of his powers, can scarcely do better than discuss either one or the other. A man of genius will rarely, and should never, undertake either; first, because both are excessively hackneyed; and, secondly, because the reader never fails, in forming his opinion of a book, to make discount, either wittingly or unwittingly, for that intrinsic interest which is inseparable from the subject and independent of the manner in which it is treated. Very few and very dull indeed are those who do not instantaneously perceive the distinction; and thus there are two great classes of fictions: a popular and widely circulated class, read with pleasure, but without admiration—in which the author is lost or forgotten, or remembered, if at all, with something very nearly akin to contempt; and then, a class not so popular, nor so widely diffused, in which, at every paragraph, arises a distinctive and highly pleasurable interest, springing from our perception and appreciation of the skill employed, or the genius evinced, in the composition. After perusal of the one class, we think solely of the book; after reading the other, chiefly of the author. The former class leads to popularity; the latter, to fame. In the former case, the

books sometimes live, while the authors usually die; in the latter, even when the works perish, the man survives. Among American writers of the less generally circulated, but more worthy and more artistical, fictions, we may mention Mr. Brockden Brown, Mr. John Neal, Mr. Simms, Mr. Hawthorne; at the head of the more popular division we may place Mr. Cooper.

"The Hutted Knoll," without pretending to detail facts, gives a narrative of fictitious events, similar, in nearly all respects, to occurrences which actually happened during the opening scenes of the Revolution, and at other epochs of our history. It pictures the dangers, difficulties, and distresses of a large family, living, completely insulated, in the forest. The tale commences with a description of the "region which lies in the angle formed by the junction of the Mohawk with the Hudson, extending as far south as the line of Pennsylvania, and west to the verge of that vast rolling plain which composes Western New York"—a region of which the novelist has already frequently written, and the whole of which, with a trivial exception, was a wilderness before the Revolution. Within this district, and on a creek running into the Unadilla, a certain Captain Willoughby purchases an estate or "patent," and there retires, with his family and dependents, to pass the close of his life in agricultural pursuits. He has been an officer in the British army, but, after serving many years, had sold his commission, and purchased one for his only son, Robert,

who alone does not accompany the party into the forest. This party consists of the captain himself, his wife; his daughter, Beulah; an adopted daughter, Maud Meredith; an invalid sergeant, Joyce, who had served under the captain; a Presbyterian preacher, Mr. Woods; a Scotch mason, Jamie Allen; an Irish laborer, Michael O'Hearn; a Connecticut man, Joel Strides; four negroes, Old Plin and young Plin, Big Smash and little Smash; eight axe-men, a house-carpenter, a mill-wright, etc., etc. Besides these, a Tuscarora Indian called Nick, or *Wyandotté*, accompanies the expedition. This Indian, who figures largely in the story, and gives it its title, may be considered as the principal character—the one chiefly elaborated. He is an outcast from his tribe, has been known to Captain Willoughby for thirty years, and is a compound of all the good and bad qualities which make up the character of the half-civilized Indian. He does not remain with the settlers; but appears and re-appears at intervals upon the scene.

Nearly the whole of the first volume is occupied with a detailed account of the estate purchased (which is termed "The Hutted Knoll," from a natural mound upon which the principal house is built), and of the progressive arrangements and improvements. Toward the close of the volume the Revolution commences; and the party at the "Knoll" are besieged by a band of savages and "rebels," with whom an understanding exists, on the part of Joel Strides, the Yankee. This traitor, instigated by

the hope of possessing Captain Willoughby's estate, should it be confiscated, brings about a series of defections from the party of the settlers, and finally, deserting himself, reduces the whole number to six or seven, capable of bearing arms. Captain Willoughby resolves, however, to defend his post. His son, at this juncture, pays him a clandestine visit, and, endeavoring to reconoitre the position of the Indians, is made captive. The captain, in an attempt at rescue, is murdered by Wyandotté, whose vindictive passions had been aroused by ill-timed allusions, on the part of Willoughby, to floggings previously inflicted, by his orders, upon the Indian. Wyandotté, however, having satisfied his personal vengeance, is still the ally of the settlers. He guides Maud, who is beloved by Robert, to the hut in which the latter is confined, and effects his escape. Aroused by this escape, the Indians precipitate their attack upon the Knoll, which, through the previous treachery of Strides in ill-hanging a gate, is immediately carried. Mrs. Willoughby, Beulah, and others of the party, are killed. Maud is secreted and thus saved by Wyandotté. At the last moment, when all is apparently lost, a reinforcement appears, under command of Evert Beekman, the husband of Beulah; and the completion of the massacre is prevented. Woods, the preacher, had left the Knoll, and made his way through the enemy, to inform Beekman of the dilemma of his friends. Maud and Robert Willoughby are, of course, happily married. The concluding scene of the

novel shows us Wyandotté repenting the murder of Willoughby, and converted to Christianity through the agency of Woods.

It will be at once seen that there is nothing *original* in this story. On the contrary, it is even excessively commonplace. The lover, for example, rescued from captivity by the mistress; the Knoll carried through the treachery of an inmate; and the salvation of the besieged, at the very last moment, by a reinforcement arriving, in consequence of a message borne to a friend by one of the besieged, without the cognizance of the others; these, we say, are incidents which have been the common property of every novelist since the invention of letters. And as for *plot*, there has been no attempt at any thing of the kind. The tale is a mere succession of events, scarcely any one of which has any necessary dependence upon any one other. Plot, however, is at best, an artificial effect, requiring, like music, not only a natural bias, but long cultivation of taste for its full appreciation; some of the finest narratives in the world—"Gil-Blas" and "Robinson Crusoe," for example—have been written without its employment; and "The Hutted Knoll," like all the sea and forest novels of Cooper, has been made deeply interesting, although depending upon this peculiar source of interest not at all. Thus the absence of plot can never be critically regarded as a *defect;* although its judicious use, in all cases aiding and in no case injuring other effects, must be regarded as of a very high order of merit.

There are one or two points, however, in the mere *conduct* of the story now before us, which may, perhaps, be considered as defective. For instance, there is too much *obviousness* in all that appertains to the hanging of the large gate. In more than a dozen instances, Mrs. Willoughby is made to allude to the delay in the hanging; so that the reader is too positively and pointedly forced to perceive that this delay is to result in the capture of the Knoll. As we are never in doubt of the fact, we feel diminished interest when it actually happens. A single vague allusion, well managed, would have been in the true artistical spirit.

Again: we see too plainly, from the first, that Beekman is to marry Beulah, and that Robert Willoughby is to marry Maud. The killing of Beulah, of Mrs. Willoughby, and Jamie Allen, produces, too, a painful impression, which does not properly appertain to the right fiction. Their deaths affect us as revolting and supererogatory; since the purposes of the story are not thereby furthered in any regard. To Willoughby's murder, however distressing, the reader makes no similar objection; merely because in his decease is fulfilled a species of poetical justice. We may observe here, nevertheless, that his repeated references to his flogging the Indian seem unnatural, because we have otherwise no reason to think him a fool, or a madman, and these references, under the circumstances, are absolutely insensate. We object, also, to the manner in which the general interest is dragged out, or suspended.

The besieging party are kept before the Knoll so long, while so little is done, and so many opportunities of action are lost, that the reader takes it for granted that nothing of consequence will occur—that the besieged will be finally delivered. He gets so accustomed to the presence of danger that its excitement at length departs. The action is not sufficiently rapid. There is too much procrastination. There is too much mere talk for talk's sake. The interminable discussions between Woods and Captain Willoughby are, perhaps, the worst feature of the book, for they have not even the merit of referring to the matters on hand. In general, there is quite too much colloquy for the purpose of manifesting character, and too little for the explanation of motive. The characters of the drama would have been better made out by action; while the motives to action, the reasons for the different courses of conduct adopted by the *dramatis personæ*, might have been made to proceed more satisfactorily from their own mouths, in casual conversations, than from that of the author in person. To conclude our remarks upon the head of ill-conduct in the story, we may mention occasional incidents of the merest melodramatic absurdity; as, for example, at page 156, of the second volume, where "Willoughby had an arm round the waist of Maud, and bore her forward with a rapidity to which her own strength was entirely unequal." We may be permitted to doubt whether a young lady, of sound health and limbs, exists, within the limits of Christendom, who could not run faster, on

her own proper feet, for any considerable distance, than she could be carried upon *one arm* of either the Cretan Milo or of the Hercules Farnese.

On the other hand, it would be easy to designate many particulars which are admirably handled. The love of Maud Meredith for Robert Willoughby is painted with exquisite skill and truth. The incident of the tress of hair and box is naturally and effectively conceived. A fine collateral interest is thrown over the whole narrative by the connection of the theme with that of the Revolution; and, especially, there is an excellent dramatic point, at page 124 of the second volume, where Wyandotté, remembering the stripes inflicted upon him by Captain Willoughby, is about to betray him to his foes, when his purpose is arrested by a casual glimpse, through the forest, of the hut which contains Mrs. Willoughby, who had preserved the life of the Indian, by inoculation for the small-pox.

In the depicting of character, Mr. Cooper has been unusually successful in "Wyandotté." One or two of his personages, to be sure, must be regarded as little worth. Robert Willoughby, like most novel heroes, is a nobody that is to say, there is nothing about him which may be looked upon as distinctive. Perhaps he is rather silly than otherwise; as, for instance, when he confuses all his father's arrangements for his concealment, and bursts into the room before Strides—afterward insisting upon accompanying that person to the Indian encampment, without any

possible or impossible object. Woods, the parson, is a sad bore, upon the Dominie Sampson plan, and is, moreover, caricatured. Of Captain Willoughby we have already spoken—he is too often on stilts. Evert Beekman and Beulah are merely episodical. Joyce is nothing in the world but Corporal Trim—or, rather, Corporal Trim and water. Jamie Allen, with his prate about Catholicism, is insufferable. But Mrs. Willoughby, the humble, shrinking, womanly wife, whose whole existence centres in her affections, is worthy of Mr. Cooper. Maud Meredith is still better. In fact, we know no female portraiture, even in Scott, which surpasses her ; and yet the world has been given to understand, by the enemies of the novelist, that he is incapable of depicting a woman. Joel Strides will be recognized by all who are conversant with his general prototypes of Connecticut. Michael O'Hearn, the County Leitrim man, is an Irishman all over, and his portraiture abounds in humor ; as, for example, at page 31 of the first volume, where he has a difficulty with a skiff, not being able to account for its revolving upon its own axis, instead of moving forward ! or, at page 132, where, during divine service, to exclude at least a portion of the heretical doctrine, he stops *one* of his ears with his thumb ; or, at page 195, where a passage occurs so much to our purpose that we will be pardoned for quoting it in full. Captain Willoughby is drawing his son up through a window, from his enemies below. The assistants, placed at a distance from this window to avoid observation from

without, are ignorant of what burthen is at the end of the rope :

The men did as ordered, raising their load from the ground a foot or two at a time. In this manner the burthen approached, yard after yard, until it was evidently drawing near the window.

"It 's the captain hoisting up the big baste of a hog, for provisioning the hoose again a saige," whispered Mike to the negroes, who grinned as they tugged ; "and, when the craitur squails, see to it, that ye do not squail yourselves." At that moment the head and shoulders of a man appeared at the window. Mike let go the rope, seized a chair, and was about to knock the intruder upon the head ; but the captain arrested the blow.

"It 's one o' the vagabone Injins that has undermined the hog and come up in its stead," roared Mike.

"It 's my son," said the captain ; "see that you are silent and secret."

The negroes are, without exception, admirably drawn. The Indian, Wyandotté, however, is the great feature of the book, and is, in every respect, equal to the previous Indian creations of the author of "The Pioneer." Indeed, we think this "forest gentleman" superior to the other noted heroes of his kind—the heroes which have been immortalized by our novelist. His keen sense of the distinction. in his own character. between the chief, Wyandotté, and the drunken vagabond, Sassy Nick ; his chivalrous delicacy toward Maud, in never disclosing to

her that knowledge of her real feelings toward Robert Willoughby, which his own Indian intuition had discovered; his enduring animosity toward Captain Willoughby, softened, and for thirty years delayed, through his gratitude to the wife; and then, the vengeance consummated, his pity for that wife conflicting with his exultation at the deed,—these, we say, are all traits of a lofty excellence indeed. Perhaps the most effective passage in the book, and that which, most distinctively, brings out the character of the Tuscarora, is to be found at pages 50, 51, 52, and 53 of the second volume, where, for some trivial misdemeanor, the captain threatens to make use of the whip. The manner in which the Indian *harps* upon the threat, returning to it again and again, in every variety of phrase, forms one of the finest pieces of mere character-painting with which we have any acquaintance.

The most obvious and most unaccountable faults of "The Hutted Knoll," are those which appertain to the *style*—to the mere grammatical construction;—for, in other and more important particulars of style, Mr. Cooper, of late days, has made a very manifest improvement. His sentences, however, are arranged with an awkwardness so remarkable as to be matter of absolute astonishment, when we consider the education of the author, and his long and continual practice with the pen. In minute descriptions of localities, any verbal inaccuracy, or confusion, becomes a source of vexation and misunderstanding, detracting very much from the pleasure of perusal; and in

these inaccuracies "Wyandotté" abounds. Although, for instance, we carefully read and re-read that portion of the narrative which details the situation of the Knoll, and the construction of the buildings and walls about it, we were forced to proceed with the story without any exact or definite impressions upon the subject. Similar difficulties, from similar causes, occur *passim* throughout the book. For example, at page 41, vol. I.:

"The Indian gazed at the house, with that fierce intentness which sometimes glared, in a manner that had got to be, in its ordinary aspects, dull and besotted." This it is utterly impossible to comprehend. We presume, however, the intention is to say that although the Indian's ordinary manner (of gazing) had "got to be" dull and besotted, he occasionally gazed with an intentness that glared, and that he did so in the instance in question. The "got to be" is atrocious—the whole sentence no less so.

Here at page 9, vol. I., is something excessively vague: "Of the latter character is the face of most of that region which lies in the angle formed by the junction of the Mohawk with the Hudson," etc., etc. The Mohawk, joining the Hudson, forms *two* angles, of course,—an acute and an obtuse one; and, without further explanation, it is difficult to say which is intended.

At page 55, vol. I., we read: "The captain, owing to his English education, had avoided straight lines and formal paths; giving to the little spot the improvement on nature which is a consequence of embellishing her works

without destroying them. On each side of this lawn was an orchard, thrifty and young, and which *were* already beginning to show signs of putting forth their blossoms." Here we are tautologically informed that improvement is a consequence of embellishment, and supererogatorily told that the rule holds good only where the embellishment is not accompanied by destruction. Upon the "each orchard *were*" it is needless to comment.

At page 30, vol. I., is something similar, where Strides is represented as "never doing any thing that required a particle more than the exertion and strength that were absolutely necessary to effect his object." Did Mr. C. ever hear of any labor that *required* more exertion than was *necessary?* He means to say that Strikes exerted himself no further than was necessary—that 's all.

At page 59, vol. I., we find this sentence: "He was advancing by the only road that was ever travelled by the stranger as he approached the hut; or, he came up the valley." This is merely a vagueness of speech. "Or" is intended to imply "that is to say." The whole would be clearer thus: "He was advancing by the valley—the only road travelled by a stranger approaching the hut." We have here sixteen words, instead of Mr. Cooper's twenty-five.

At page 8, vol. II., is an unpardonable awkwardness, although an awkwardness strictly grammatical. "I was a favorite, I believe, with, certainly was much petted by, both." Upon this we need make no further observation. It speaks for itself.

We are aware, however, that there is a certain air of unfairness, in thus quoting detached passages for animadversion of this kind; for, however strictly at random our quotations may really be, we have, of course, no means of proving the fact to our readers; and there are *no* authors from whose works individual inaccurate sentences may not be culled. But we mean to say that Mr. Cooper, no doubt through haste or neglect, is *remarkably* and *especially* inaccurate, as a general rule; and, by way of demonstrating this assertion, we will dismiss our extracts at random and discuss some entire page of his composition. More than this: we will endeavor to select that particular page upon which it might naturally be supposed he would bestow the most careful attention. The reader will say at once: "Let this be his *first* page—the first page of his preface." This page, then, shall be taken, of course.

The history of the borders is filled with legends of the sufferings of isolated families, during the troubled scenes of colonial warfare. Those which we now offer to the reader are distinctive in many of their leading facts, if not rigidly true in the details. The first alone is necessary to the legitimate objects of fiction.

"*Abounds* with legends," would be better than "is filled with legends"; for it is clear that if the history were *filled* with legends, it would be all legend and no history. The word "of," too, occurs, in the first sentence, with an unpleasant frequency. The "*Those*" commencing the second sentence grammatically refers to the noun "scenes,"

immediately preceding, but is intended for "legends." The adjective "*distinctive*" is vaguely and altogether improperly employed. Mr. C., we believe, means to say, merely, that although the details of his legend may not be strictly true, facts similar to his leading ones have actually occurred. By use of the word "*distinctive*," however, he has contrived to convey a meaning nearly converse. In saying that his legend is "*distinctive*" in many of the leading facts, he has said what he clearly did not wish to say—viz.: that his legend contained facts which distinguished it from all other legends—in other words, facts never before discussed in other legends, and belonging peculiarly to his own. That Mr. C. *did* mean what we suppose, is rendered evident by the third sentence: "The first alone is necessary to the legitimate objects of fiction." This third sentence itself, however, is very badly constructed. "The first" can refer, grammatically, only to "facts"; but no such reference is intended. If we ask the question—what is meant by "The first"?—*what* "alone is necessary to the legitimate objects of fiction"?—the natural reply is "that facts similar to the leading ones have actually happened." The circumstance is alone to be cared for—this consideration "alone is necessary to the legitimate objects of fiction."

"One of the misfortunes of a nation is to hear nothing besides its own praises." This is the fourth sentence, and is by no means lucid. The design is to say that individuals composing a nation, and living altogether within

the national bounds, hear from each other only praises of the nation, and that this is a misfortune to the individuals, since it misleads them in regard to the actual condition of the nation. Here it will be seen that, to convey the intended idea, we have been forced to make distinction between the nation and its individual members; for it is evident that a nation is considered as such only in reference to other nations; and thus *as a nation*, it hears *very* much "besides its own praises"; that is to say, it hears the detractions of other rival nations. In endeavoring to compel his meaning within the compass of a brief sentence, Mr. Cooper has completely sacrificed its intelligibility.

The fifth sentence runs thus: "Although the American Revolution was probably as just an effort as was ever made by a people to resist the first inroads of oppression, the cause had its evil aspects, as well as all other human struggles."

The American Revolution is here improperly called an "effort." The effort was the cause, of which the Revolution was the result. A rebellion is an "effort" to effect a revolution. An "inroad of oppression" involves an untrue metaphor; for "inroad" appertains to aggression, to attack, to active assault. "The cause had its evil aspects as well as all other human struggles," implies that the cause had not only its evil aspects, but had, also, all other human struggles. If the words must be retained at all, they should be thus arranged: "The cause, like [or as well as] all other human struggles, had its evil aspects";

or better thus: "The cause had its evil aspect, as have all human struggles." "Other" is superfluous.

The sixth sentence is thus written: "We have been so much accustomed to hear every thing extolled, of late years, that could be dragged into the remotest connection with that great event, and the principles which led to it, that there is danger of overlooking truth in a pseudo patriotism." The "of late years," here, should follow the "accustomed," or precede the "We have been"; and the Greek "pseudo" is objectionable, since its exact equivalent is to be found in the English "false." "Spurious" would be better, perhaps, than either.

Inadvertences such as these sadly disfigure the style of "The Hutted Knoll"; and every true friend of its author must regret his inattention to the minor morals of the Muse. But these "minor morals," it may be said, are trifles at best. Perhaps so. At all events, we should never have thought of dwelling so pertinaciously upon the unessential demerits of "Wyandotté," could we have discovered any more momentous upon which to comment.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BARRETT.*

"A WELL-BRED *man*," says Sir James Puckle, in his "Gray Cap for a Green Head," "will never give himself the liberty to speak ill of women." We emphasize the "man." Setting aside, for the present, certain rare commentators and compilers of the species—creatures neither precisely men, women, nor Mary Wollstonecrafts,—setting these aside as unclassifiable, we may observe that the race of critics are masculine—men. With the exception, perhaps, of Mrs. Anne Royal, we can call to mind no female who has occupied, even temporarily, the Zoilus throne. And this, the Salic law, is an evil; for the inherent chivalry of the critical *man* renders it not only an unpleasant task to him "to speak ill of a woman" (and a woman and her book are identical), but an almost impossible task not to laud her *ad nauseam*. In general, therefore, it is the unhappy lot of the authoress to be subjected, time after time, to the downright degradation of mere puffery. On her own side of the Atlantic, Miss Bar-

* "The Drama of Exile, and Other Poems." By Elizabeth Barrett Barrett, author of "The Seraphim, and Other Poems."

rett has indeed, in one instance at least, escaped the infliction of this lamentable contumely and wrong; but if she had been really solicitous of its infliction in America, she could not have adopted a more effectual plan than that of saying a few words about "the great American people," in an American edition of her work, published under the superintendence of an American author.* Of the innumerable "native" notices of "The Drama of Exile," which have come under our observation, we can call to mind *not one* in which there is any thing more remarkable than the critic's dogged determination to find *nothing* barren, from Beersheba to Dan. Another, in the *Democratic Review*, has proceeded so far, it is true, as to venture a *very* delicate insinuation to the effect that the poetess "will not fail to speak her mind, *though it bring upon her a bad rhyme*"; beyond this, nobody has proceeded: and as for the elaborate paper in the new *Whig Monthly*, all that anybody can say or think, and all that Miss Barrett can *feel* respecting it is, that it is an eulogy as well written as it is an insult well intended. Now of all the friends of the fair author, we doubt whether one

* We are sorry to notice, in the American edition, a multitude of typographical errors, many of which affect the sense, and should therefore be corrected in a second impression, if called for. How far they are chargeable to the London copy, we are not prepared to say. "Froze," for instance, is printed "frore." "Foregone," throughout, is printed "forgone"; "Wordless" is printed "worldless"; "worldly," "wordly"; "spilt," "split," etc., etc., while transpositions, false accents, and mispunctuations abound. We indicate a few pages on which such inadvertences are to be discovered: Vol. 1—23, 26, 37, 45, 53, 56, 80, 166, 174, 180, 185, 251. Vol. 2—109, 114, 240, 247, 253, 272.

exists with more profound—with more enthusiastic—reverence and admiration of her genius, than the writer of these words. And it is for this very reason, beyond all others, that he intends to speak of her *the truth*. Our chief regret is, nevertheless, that the limits of this work will preclude the possibility of our speaking this truth so fully, and so much in detail as we could wish. By far the most valuable criticism that we, or that any one could give, of the volumes now lying before us, would be the quotation of three fourths of their contents. But we have this advantage—that the work has been long published, and almost universally read,—and thus, in some measure, we may proceed, concisely, as if the text of our context were an understood thing.

In her preface to this, the "American Edition" of her late poems, Miss Barrett, speaking of "The Drama of Exile," says: "I decided on publishing it, after considerable hesitation and doubt. Its subject rather fastened on me than was chosen; and the form, approaching the model of the Greek tragedy, shaped itself under my hand rather by force of pleasure than of design. But when the compositional excitement had subsided, I felt afraid of my position. My own object was the new and strange experiment of the fallen Humanity, as it went forth from Paradise in the Wilderness, with a peculiar reference to Eve's allotted grief, which, considering that self-sacrifice belonged to her womanhood, and the consciousness of being the organ of the Fall to her offence, appeared to me

imperfectly apprehended hitherto, and more expressible by a woman than by a man." In this abstract announcement of the theme, it is difficult to understand the ground of the poet's hesitation to publish ; for the theme in itself seems admirably adapted to the purposes of the closest drama. The poet, nevertheless, is very properly conscious of failure—a failure which occurs not in the general, but in the particular conception, and which must be placed to the account of "the model of the Greek tragedies." The Greek tragedies *had* and even *have* high merits ; but we act wisely in now substituting for the external and typified human sympathy of the antique Chorus, a direct, internal, living, and moving sympathy itself ; and although Æschylus might have done service as "a model," to either Euripides or Sophocles, yet were Sophocles and Euripides in London to-day, they would, perhaps, while granting a certain formless and shadowy grandeur, indulge a quiet smile at the shallowness and uncouthness of that Art which, in the old amphitheatres, had beguiled them into applause of the Œdipus at Colonos.

It would have been better for Miss Barrett, if, throwing herself independently upon her own very extraordinary resources, and forgetting that a Greek had ever lived, she had involved her Eve in a series of adventures merely natural, or if not this, of adventures preternatural within the limits of at least a conceivable relation—a relation of matter to spirit and spirit to matter, that should have left room for something like palpable action and comprehensi-

ble emotion—that should not have utterly precluded the development of that womanly character which is admitted as the principal object of the poem. As the case actually stands, it is only in a few snatches of verbal intercommunication with Adam and Lucifer that we behold her as a woman at all. For the rest, she is a mystical something or nothing, enwrapped in a fog of rhapsody about the Transfiguration, and the Seed, and the Bruising of the Heel, and other talk of a nature that no man ever pretended to understand in plain prose, and which, when solar-microscoped into poetry "upon the model of the Greek drama," is about as convincing as the Egyptian Lectures of Mr. Silk Buckingham—about as much to any purpose under the sun as the *hi presto!* conjurations of Signor Blitz. What are we to make, for example, of dramatic colloquy such as this?—the words are those of a Chorus of Invisible Angels addressing Adam:

> Live, work on, O Earthy!
> By the Actual's tension
> Speed the arrow worthy
> Of a pure ascension.
> From the low earth round you
> Reach the heights above you:
> From the stripes that wound you
> Seek the loves that love you!
> God's divinest burneth plain
> Through the crystal diaphane
> Of our loves that love you.

Now we do not mean to assert that, by excessive "tension" of the intellect, a reader accustomed to the cant of the transcendentalists (or of those who degrade an

ennobling philosophy by styling themselves such) may not succeed in ferreting from the passage quoted, and indeed from each of the thousand similar ones throughout the book, something that shall bear the aspect of an absolute idea; but we do mean to say, first, that in nine cases out of ten, the thought when dug out will be found very poorly to repay the labor of the digging,—for it is the nature of thought in general, as it is the nature of some ores in particular, to be richest when most superficial. And we do mean to say, secondly, that in nineteen cases out of twenty, the reader will suffer the most valuable ore to remain unmined to all eternity, before he will be put to the trouble of digging for it one inch. And we do mean to assert, thirdly, that no reader is to be condemned for *not* putting himself to the trouble of digging even the one inch; for no writer has the right to impose any such necessity upon him. What is worth thinking is distinctly thought; what is distinctly thought can, and should be, distinctly expressed, or should not be expressed at all. Nevertheless, there is no more appropriate opportunity than the present for admitting and maintaining, at once, what has never before been either maintained or admitted, that there is a justifiable exception to the rule for which we contend. It is where the design is to convey the fantastic—not the obscure. To give the idea of the latter we need, as in general, the most precise and definite terms, and those who employ other terms but confound obscurity of expression with the expression of obscurity. The

fantastic in itself, however,—phantasm,—may be materially furthered in its development by the *quaint* in phraseology,—a proposition which any moralist may examine at his leisure for himself.

"The Drama of Exile" opens with a very palpable *bull:* "Scene, the outer side of the gate of Eden, shut fast with clouds—[a scene out of sight!]—from the depth of which revolves the sword of fire, self-moved. A watch of innumerable angels rank above rank, slopes up from around it to the zenith; and the glare cast from their brightness and from the sword, extends many miles into the wilderness. Adam and Eve are seen in the distance, flying along the glare. The angel Gabriel and Lucifer are beside the gate." These are the "stage directions" which greet us on the threshold of the book. We complain first of the bull; secondly, of the blue-fire melo-dramatic aspect of the revolving sword; thirdly, of the duplicate nature of the sword, which, if steel, and sufficiently inflamed to do service in burning, would, perhaps, have been in no temper to cut; and on the other hand, if sufficiently cool to have an edge, would have accomplished little in the way of scorching a personage so well accustomed to fire and brimstone and all that, as we have very good reason to believe Lucifer was. We cannot help objecting, too, to the "innumerable angels," as a force altogether disproportioned to the one enemy to be kept out; either the self-moving sword itself, we think, or the angel Gabriel alone, or five or six of the "innu-

merable " angels, would have sufficed to keep the Devil (or is it Adam ?) outside of the gate—which, after all, he might not have been able to discover, on account of the clouds.

Far be it from us, however, to dwell irreverently on matters which have venerability in the faith or in the fancy of Miss Barrett. We allude to these *niaiseries* at all—found here in the very first paragraph of her poem,—simply by way of putting in the clearest light the mass of inconsistency and antagonism in which her *subject* has inextricably involved her. She has made allusion to Milton, and no doubt felt secure in her theme (as a theme merely) when she considered his " Paradise Lost." But even in Milton's own day, when men had the habit of believing all things, the more nonsensical the more readily, and of worshipping, in blind acquiescence, the most preposterous of impossibilities—even *then*, there were not wanting individuals who would have read the great epic with more zest, could it have been explained to their satisfaction, how and why it was, not only that a snake quoted Aristotle's ethics, and behaved otherwise pretty much as he pleased, but that bloody battles were continually being fought between bloodless " innumerable angels," that found no inconvenience in loosing a wing one minute and a head the next, and if pounded up into puff-paste late in the afternoon, were as good " innumerable angels " as new the next morning, in time to be at *reveillé* roll-call. And now—at the present epoch—there are few people

who do not occasionally *think*. This is emphatically the thinking age,—indeed it may very well be questioned whether mankind ever substantially thought before. The fact is, if the "Paradise Lost" were written to-day (assuming that it had never been written when it was), not even its eminent, although over-estimated, merits would counterbalance, either in the public view or in the opinion of any critic at once intelligent and honest, the multitudinous incongruities which are part and parcel of its plot.

But in the plot of the drama of Miss Barrett it is something even worse than incongruity which affronts,—a continuous mystical strain of ill-fitting and exaggerated allegory—if, indeed, allegory is not much too respectable a term for it. We are called upon, for example, to sympathize in the whimsical woes of two spirits, who, upspringing from the bowels of the earth, set immediately to bewailing their miseries in jargon such as this:

> I am the spirit of the harmless earth;
> God spake me softly out among the stars,
> As softly as a blessing of much worth—
> And then his smile did follow unawares,
> That all things, fashioned, so, for use and duty,
> Might shine anointed with his chrism of beauty—
> Yet I wail!
> I drave on with the worlds exultingly,
> Obliquely down the Godlight's gradual fall—
> Individual aspect and complexity
> Of gyratory orb and interval,
> Lost in the fluent motion of delight
> Toward the high ends of Being, beyond Sight—
> Yet I wail!

Innumerable other spirits discourse successively after the same fashion, each ending every stanza of his lamentation with the "Yet I wail!" When at length they have fairly made an end, Eve touches Adam upon the elbow, and hazards, also, the profound and pathetic observation: "Lo, Adam, they wail!"—which is nothing more than the simple truth—for they *do*—and God deliver us from any such wailing again!

It is not our purpose, however, to demonstrate what every reader of these volumes will have readily seen self-demonstrated—the utter indefensibility of "The Drama of Exile," considered uniquely, as a work of art. We have none of us to be told that a medley of metaphysical recitatives sung out of tune, at Adam and Eve, by all manner of inconceivable abstractions, is not exactly the best material for a poem. Still it may very well happen that among this material there shall be individual passages of great beauty. But should any one doubt the possibility, let him be satisfied by a single extract such as follows:

> On a mountain peak
> Half sheathed in primal woods and glittering
> In *spasms of awful sunshine*, at that hour
> A lion couched,—part raised upon his paws,
> *With his calm massive face turned full on thine,*
> *And his mane listening.* When the ended curse
> Left silence in the world, right suddenly
> He sprang up rampant, and stood straight and stiff,
> *As if the new reality of death*
> *Were dashed against his eyes,*—and roared so fierce,
> (*Such thick carnivorous passion in his throat,*
> *Tearing a passage through the wrath and fear,*)—
> And roared so wild, and smote from all the hills

> Such *fast keen echoes crumbling down the vales*
> *To distant silence*,—that the forest beasts,
> One after one, did mutter a response
> In savage and in sorrowful complaint
> *Which trailed along the gorges.*

There is an Homeric force here—a vivid picturesqueness which all men will appreciate and admire. It is, however, the longest quotable passage in the drama, not disfigured with blemishes of importance; although there are many—very many passages of a far loftier order of excellence, so disfigured, and which, therefore, it would not suit our immediate purpose to extract. The truth is,—and it may be as well mentioned at this point as elsewhere—that we are not to look in Miss Barrett's works for any examples of what has been occasionally termed "sustained effort"; for neither are there, in any of her poems, any long commendable paragraphs, nor are there any individual compositions which will bear the slightest examination as consistent art-products. Her wild and magnificent genius seems to have contented itself with points—to have exhausted itself in flashes;—but it is the profusion—the unparalleled number and close propinquity of these points and flashes which render her book *one flame*, and justify us in calling her, unhesitatingly, the greatest—the most glorious of her sex.

"The Drama of Exile" calls for little more, in the way of comment, than what we have generally said. Its finest particular feature is, perhaps, the rapture of Eve—rapture bursting through despair—upon discovering that she still

possesses, in the unwavering love of Adam, an undreamed-of and priceless treasure. The poem ends, as it commences, with a bull. The last sentence gives us to understand that "there is a sound through the silence, as of the falling tears of an angel." How there can be sound during silence, and how an audience are to distinguish, by such sound, angel tears from any other species of tears, it may be as well, perhaps, not too particularly to inquire.

Next, in length, to "The Drama" is "The Vision of Poets." We object to the didacticism of its design, which the poetess thus states: "I have attempted to express here my view of the mission of the veritable poet—of the self-abnegation implied in it, of the uses of sorrow suffered in it, of the great work accomplished in it through suffering, and of the duty and glory of what Balzac has beautifully and truly called '*la patience angelique du génie.*'" This "view" may be correct, but neither its correctness nor its falsity has any thing to do with a poem. If a thesis is to be demonstrated, we need *prose* for its demonstration. In this instance, so far as the allegorical instruction and argumentation are lost sight of, in the upper-current,—so far as the main admitted intention of the work is kept out of view,—so far only is the work a poem, and so far only is the poem worth notice, or worthy of its author. Apart from its poetical character, the composition is thoughtful, vivid, epigrammatic, and abundant in just observation, although the critical opinions introduced are not always our own. A reviewer in *Blackwood's*

Magazine quoting many of these critical portraits, takes occasion to find fault with the grammar of this tristich:

> Here Æschylus—the women swooned
> To see so awful when he frowned
> As the Gods did—he standeth crowned.

"What on earth," says the critic, "are we to make of the words 'the women swooned to see so awful'? * * * The syntax will punish future commentators as much as some of his own corrupt choruses." In general we are happy to agree with this reviewer, whose decisions respecting the book are, upon the whole, so nearly coincident with ours, that we hesitated, through fear of repetition, to undertake a *critique* at all, until we considered that we might say a very great deal in simply supplying his omissions; but he frequently errs through mere hurry, and never did he err more singularly than at the point now in question. He evidently supposes that "awful" has been misused as an adverb and made referable to "women." But not so; and although the construction of the passage is unjustifiably involute, its grammar is intact. Disentangling the construction, we make this evident at once. "Here Æschylus (he) standeth crowned, (whom) the women swooned to see so awful, when he frowned as the Gods did." The "he" is excessive, and the "whom" is understood. Respecting the lines—

> Euripides, with close and mild
> Scholastic lips, that could be wild,
> And laugh or sob out like a child
> Right in the classes,

the critic observes: "'Right in the classes' throws our intellect completely upon its beam-ends." But, if so, the fault possibly lies in the crankness of the intellect; for the words themselves mean merely that Sophocles laughed or cried like a school-boy—like a child right (or just) in his classes—one who had not yet left school. The phrase is affected, we grant, but quite intelligible. A still more remarkable misapprehension occurs in regard to the triplet:

> And Goethe, with that reaching eye
> His soul reached out from, far and high,
> And fell from inner entity.

The reviewer's remarks upon this are too preposterous not to be quoted in full; we doubt if any commentator of equal dignity ever so egregiously committed himself before. "Goethe," he says, "is a perfect enigma; what does the word 'fell' mean? δεινος we suppose—that is, 'not to be trifled with.' But surely it sounds very strange, although it may be true enough, to say that his 'fellness' is occasioned by 'inner entity.' But perhaps the line has some deeper meaning which we are unable to fathom." Perhaps it has: and this is the criticism—the British criticism—the *Blackwood* criticism—to which we have so long implicitly bowed down! As before, Miss Barrett's verses are needlessly involved, but their meaning requires no Œdipus. Their construction is thus intended: "And Goethe, with that reaching eye from which his soul reached out, far and high, and (in so reaching) fell

from inner entity." The plain prose is this: Goethe, (the poet would say,) in involving himself too far and too profoundly in external speculations—speculations concerning the world without him—neglected or made miscalculations concerning his inner entity, or being,—concerning the world within. This idea is involved in the metaphor of a person leaning from a window so far that finally he falls from it—the person being the soul, the window the eye.

Of the twenty-eight "Sonnets," which immediately succeed "The Drama of Exile," and which receive the especial commendation of *Blackwood*, we have no very enthusiastic opinion. The *best* sonnet is objectionable from its extreme artificiality; and, to be effective, this species of composition requires a minute management—a well-controlled dexterity of touch—compatible neither with Miss Barrett's deficient constructiveness, nor with the fervid rush and whirl of her genius. Of the particular instances here given, we prefer "The Prisoner," of which the conclusion is particularly beautiful. In general, the themes are obtrusively metaphysical, or didactic.

"The Romaunt of the Page," an imitation of the old English ballad, is neither very original in subject, nor very skilfully put together. We speak comparatively, of course; it is not very good—for Miss Barrett; and what we have said of this poem will apply equally to a very similar production, "The Rhyme of the Duchess May." "The Poet and the Bird," "A Child Asleep," "Crowned

and Wedded," "Crowned and Buried," "To Flush, my Dog," "The Fourfold Aspect," "A Flower in a Letter," "A Lay of the Early Rose," "That Day," "L. E. L.'s Questio," "Catarina to Camöens," "Wine of Cyprus," "The Dead Pan," "Sleeping and Watching," "A Portrait," "The Mournful Mother," and "A Valediction," although all burning with divine fire, manifested only in scintillations, have nothing in them idiosyncratic. "The House of Clouds" and "The Last Bower" are superlatively lovely, and show the vast powers of the poet in the field best adapted to their legitimate display; the *themes*, here, could not be improved. The former poem is purely imaginative; the latter is unobjectionably because unobtrusively suggestive of a moral, and is, perhaps, upon the whole, the most admirable composition in the two volumes, or, if it is not, then "The Lay of the Brown Rosarie" *is*. In this last the ballad-character is elevated—etherealized—and thus made to afford scope for an ideality at once the richest and most vigorous in the world. The peculiar foibles of the author are here, too, dropped bodily, as a mantle, in the tumultuous movement and excitement of the narrative.

Miss Barrett has need only of *real* self-interest in her subjects, to do justice to her subjects and to herself. On the other hand, "A Rhapsody of Life's Progress," although gleaming with cold coruscations, is the least meritorious, because the most philosophical, effusion of the whole:—this, we say, in flat contradiction of the

"*spoudiotaton kai philosophikotaton genos*" of Aristotle. "The Cry of the Human" is singularly effective, not more from the vigor and ghastly passion of its thought than from the artistically-conceived *arabesquerie* of its rhythm. "The Cry of the Children," similar, although superior in tone and handling, is full of a nervous unflinching energy—a horror sublime in its simplicity—of which a far greater than Dante might have been proud. "Bertha in the Lane," a rich ballad, very singularly excepted from the wholesale commendation of the *Democratic Review* as "perhaps not one of the best," and designated by *Blackwood*, on the contrary, as "decidedly the finest poem of the collection," is *not* the *very* best, we think, only because mere pathos, however exquisite, cannot be ranked with the loftiest exhibitions of the ideal. Of "Lady Geraldine's Courtship," the magazine last quoted observes that, "some pith is put forth in its passionate parts." We will not pause to examine the delicacy or lucidity of the metaphor embraced in the "*putting forth* of some pith"; but unless by "some pith" itself is intended the utmost conceivable intensity and vigor, then the critic is merely damning with faint praise. With the exception of Tennyson's "Locksley Hall," we have never perused a poem combining so much of the fiercest passion with so much of the most ethereal fancy, as the "Lady Geraldine's Courtship" of Miss Barrett. We are forced to admit, however, that the latter work *is* a very palpable imitation of the former, which it surpasses in plot, or

rather in thesis, as much as it falls below it in artistical management, and a certain calm energy—lustrous and indomitable—such as we might imagine in a broad river of molten gold.

It is in the "Lady Geraldine" that the critic of *Blackwood* is again put at fault in the comprehension of a couple of passages. He confesses his inability "to make out the construction of the words, 'all that spirits pure and ardent are cast out of love and reverence, because chancing not to hold.'" There are comparatively few American school-boys who could not parse it. The prosaic construction would run thus: all *that* (wealth understood) because chancing not to hold *which* (or on account of not holding which) all pure and ardent spirits are cast out of love and reverence." The "which" is involved in the relative pronoun "that," the second word of the sentence. *All that we know is, that Miss Barrett is right;* here is a parallel phrase, meaning "all that (which) we know," etc. The fact is, that the accusation of imperfect grammar would have been more safely, if more generally, urged; in descending to particular exceptions, the reviewer has been doing little more than exposing himself at all points.

Turning aside, however, from grammar, he declares his incapacity to fathom the meaning of—

> She has halls and she has castles, and the resonant steam-eagles
> *Follow far on the directing of her floating dove-like hand—*
> With a thunderous vapor trailing underneath the starry vigils,
> So to mark upon the blasted heaven the measure of her land.

Now it must be understood that he is profoundly serious in his declaration—he really *does not* apprehend the thought designed—and he is even more than profoundly serious, too, in intending these his own comments upon his own stolidity, for wit:—"We thought that steam-coaches generally followed the directing of no hand except the stoker's, but *it*, certainly, is always much *liker* a raven than a dove." After this, who shall question the infallibility of Christopher North? We presume there are very few of *our* readers who will not easily appreciate the richly imaginative conception of the poetess:—The Lady Geraldine is supposed to be standing in her own door (positively not on the top of an engine), and thence pointing, "with her floating dove-like hand," to the lines of vapor, from the "resonant steam-eagles," that designate upon the "blasted heaven," the remote boundaries of her domain. But, perhaps, we are guilty of a very gross absurdity ourselves, in commenting *at all* upon the whimsicalities of a reviewer who can deliberately *select* for special animadversion the second of the four verses we here copy:

> Eyes, he said, now throbbing through me! are ye eyes that did undo me?
> *Shining eyes like antique jewels set in Parian statue-stone!*
> Underneath that calm white forehead are ye ever burning torrid
> O'er the desolate sand desert of my heart and life undone?

The ghost of the Great Frederick might, to be sure, quote at us, in his own Latin, his favorite adage, "De gustibus non est disputand*us*"; but, when we take into consideration the moral designed, the weirdness of effect

intended, and the historical adaptation of the fact alluded to, in the line italicized, (a fact of which it is by no means impossible that the critic is ignorant,) we cannot refrain from expressing our conviction—and we here *express it* in the teeth of the whole horde of the Ambrosianians—that from the entire range of poetical literature there shall not, in a century, be produced a more sonorous, a more vigorous verse, a juster, a nobler, a more ideal, a more magnificent image—than this very image, in this very verse, which the most noted magazine of Europe has so especially and so contemptuously condemned.

The "Lady Geraldine" is, we think, the only poem of its author which is not deficient, considered as an artistical whole. Her constructive ability, as we have already suggested, is either not very remarkable, or has never been properly brought into play; in truth, her genius is too impetuous for the minuter technicalities of that elaborate *Art* so needful in the building up of pyramids for immortality. This deficiency, then,—if there be any such,—is her chief weakness. Her other foibles, although some of them are, in fact, glaring, glare, nevertheless, to no very material ill purpose. There are none which she will not readily dismiss in her future works. She retains them now, perhaps, because unaware of their existence.

Her affectations are unquestionably many, and generally inexcusable. We may, perhaps, tolerate such words as "blé," "chrysm," "nympholeptic," "œnomel," and "chrysopras"; they have at least the merit either of dis-

tinct meaning, or of terse and sonorous expression; but what can be well said in defence of the unnecessary nonsense of "'ware" for "aware"; of "'bide" for "abide"; of "'gins" for "begins"; of "'las" for "alas"; of "oftly," "ofter," and "oftest," for "often," "more often," and "most often"; or of "erelong" in the sense of "long ago"? That there is *authority* for the mere words proves nothing; those who employed them in their day would not employ them if writing *now*. Although we grant, too, that the poetess is very usually Homeric in her compounds, there is no intelligibilty of construction, and therefore no force of meaning in "dew-pallid," "pale-passioned," and "silver-solemn." Neither have we any partiality for "drave" or "*su*preme," or "*la*ment"; and while upon this topic, we may as well observe that there are few readers who do any thing but laugh, or stare, at such phrases as "L. E. L.'s Last Questio"; "The Cry of the Human"; "Leaning from my human"; "Heaven assist the human"; "the full sense of your mortal"; "a grave for your divine"; "falling off from our created"; "he sends this gage for thy pity's counting"; "they could not press their futures on the present of her courtesy"; or "could another fairer lack to thee, lack to thee?" There are few, at the same time, who do not feel disposed to weep outright, when they hear of such things as "Hope withdrawing her peradventure"; "spirits dealing in pathos of antithesis"; "angels in antagonism to God and his reflex beatitudes"; "songs of glories

ruffling down door-ways"; "God's possibles"; and "rules of Mandom."

We have already said, however, that mere *quaintness*, within reasonable limit, is not only *not* to be regarded as affectation, but has its proper artistic uses in aiding a fantastic effect. We quote from the lines, "To My Dog Flush," a passage in exemplification:

> Leap! thy broad tail waves a light!
> Leap! thy tender feet are bright,
> Canopied in fringes!
> Leap! those tasselled ears of thine
> Flicker strangely, fair and fine,
> *Down their golden inches!*

And again—from the song of a tree-spirit, in "The Drama of Exile":

> The Divine impulsion cleaves
> In dim movements to the leaves
> *Dropt and lifted, dropt and lifted,*
> In the sun-light greenly sifted,—
> *In the sun-light and the moon-light*
> *Greenly sifted through the trees.*
> Ever wave the Eden trees,
> *In the night-light and the noon-light,*
> With a ruffling of green branches,
> *Shaded off to resonances,*
> Never stirred by rain or breeze.

The thoughts, here, belong to the highest order of poetry, but they could not have been wrought into effective expression without the instrumentality of those repetitions—those unusual phrases—in a word, those *quaintnesses*, which it has been too long the fashion to censure, indiscriminately, under the one general head of "affecta-

tion." No true poet will fail to be enraptured with the two extracts above quoted—but we believe there are few who would not find a difficulty in reconciling the psychal impossibility of refraining from admiration, with the too-hastily attained mental conviction that, critically, there is nothing to admire.

Occasionally, we meet in Miss Barrett's poems a certain *far-fetchedness* of imagery, which is reprehensible in the extreme. What, for example, are we to think of—

> Now he hears the angel voices
> Folding silence in the room?—

undoubtedly, that it is nonsense, and no more; or of

> How the silence round you shivers
> While our voices through it go?—

again, unquestionably, that it is nonsense, and nothing beyond.

Sometimes we are startled by knotty paradoxes; and it is not acquitting their perpetrator of all blame on their account to admit that, in some instances, they are susceptible of solution. It is really difficult to discover any thing for approbation, in enigmas such as—

> That bright impassive, passive angel-hood,

or—

> The silence of my heart is full of sound.

At long intervals, we are annoyed by specimens of repulsive imagery, as where the children cry:

> How long, O cruel nation,
> Will you stand, to move the world, *on a child's heart—*
> *Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation?* etc.

Now, and then, too, we are confounded by a pure platitude, as when Eve exclaims :

> Leave us not
> In agony beyond what we can bear,
> And in abasement *below thunder-mark !*

or, when the Saviour is made to say :

> So, at last !
> He shall look round on you *with lids too straight*
> *To hold the grateful tears.*

"Strait" was, no doubt, intended, but does not materially elevate, although it slightly elucidates, the thought. A very remarkable passage is that, also, wherein Eve bids the infant voices—

> Hear the steep generations, how they fall
> Adown the visionary stairs of Time.
> Like supernatural thunders—far yet near,
> Sowing their fiery echoes through the hills !

Here, saying nothing of the affectation in "adown"; not alluding to the insoluble paradox of "far yet near"; not mentioning the inconsistent metaphor involved in the "sowing of *fiery* echoes"; adverting but slightly to the misusage of "like," in place of "as," and to the impropriety of making any thing fall like *thunder*, which has never been known to fall at all; merely hinting, too, at the misapplication of "steep," to the "generations," instead of to the "stairs,"—a perversion in no degree to be justified by the fact that so preposterous a figure as *synecdoche* exists in the school-books;—letting these things

pass, for the present, we shall still find it difficult to understand how Miss Barrett should have been led to think that the principal idea itself—the abstract idea—the idea of *tumbling down stairs*, in any shape, or under any circumstances —either a poetical or a decorous conception. And yet we have seen this very passage quoted as "sublime," by a critic who seems to take it for granted, as a general rule, that Nat-Leeism is the loftiest order of literary merit. That the lines very *narrowly missed* sublimity, we grant; that they came within a step of it, we admit; but, unhappily, the step is the *one* step which, time out of mind, has intervened between the sublime and the ridiculous. So true is this, that any person—that even *we*—with a very partial modification of the imagery—a modification that shall not interfere with its richly spiritual *tone*—may elevate the quotation into unexceptionability. For example, and we offer it with profound deference:

> Hear the far generations—how they crash,
> From crag to crag, down the precipitous Time,
> In multitudinous thunders that upstartle,
> Aghast, the echoes from their cavernous lairs
> In the visionary hills!

We have no doubt that our version has its faults—but it has, at least, the merit of consistency. Not only is a mountain more poetical than a pair of stairs; but echoes are more appropriately typified as wild beasts than as seeds; and echoes and wild beasts agree better with a mountain, than does a pair of stairs with the *sowing* of seeds—even admitting that these seeds be seeds of fire,

and be sown broadcast "among the hills," by a steep generation, while in the act of tumbling down the stairs —that is to say, of coming down the stairs—in too violent a hurry to be capable of sowing the seeds as accurately as all seeds should be sown ; nor is the matter rendered any better for Miss Barrett, even if the construction of her sentence is to be understood as implying that the fiery seeds were sown, not immediately by the steep generations that tumbled down the stairs, but mediately, through the intervention of the "supernatural thunders" that were *occasioned* by the "steep generations" that tumbled down the stairs.

The poetess is not unfrequently guilty of repeating herself. The "thunder cloud veined by lightning" appears, for instance, on pages 34 of the first and 228 of the second volume. The "silver clash of wings" is heard at pages 53 of the first and 269 of the second; and angel tears are discovered to be falling as well at page 27 as at the conclusion of "The Drama of Exile." Steam, too, in the shape of Death's White Horse, comes upon the ground, both at page 244 of the first and 179 of the second volume, and there are multitudinous other repetitions, both of phrase and idea, but it is the excessive reiteration of pet *words* which is, perhaps, the most obtrusive of the minor errors of the poet. "Chrystalline," "Apocalypse," "foregone," "evangel," "'ware," "throb," "level," "loss," and the musical term "minor," are forever upon her lips. The chief favorites, however, are

"down" and "leaning," which are echoed and re-echoed not only *ad infinitum*, but in every whimsical variation of import. As Miss Barrett certainly cannot be aware of the extent of this mannerism, we will venture to call her attention to a few—comparatively a *very* few examples:

Pealing *down* the depths of Godhead . . .
Smiling *down* as Venus *down* the waves . . .
Smiling *down* the steep world very purely . . .
Down the purple of this chamber . . .
Moving *down* the hidden depths of loving . . .
Cold the sun shines *down* the door . . .
Which brought angels *down* our talk . . .
Let your souls behind you *lean* gently moved . . .
But angels *leaning* from the golden seats . . .
And melancholy *leaning* out of heaven . . .
And I know the heavens are *leaning* down . . .
Then over the casement she *leaneth* . . .
Forbear that dream, too near to heaven it *leaned* . . .
I would *lean* my spirit o'er you . . .
Thou, O sapient angel, *leanest o'er* . . .
Shapes of brightness *overlean* thee . . .
They are *leaning* their young heads . . .
Out of heaven shall o'er you *lean* . . .
While my spirit *leans* and reaches . . .
Etc., etc., etc.

In the matter of grammar, upon which the Edinburgh critic insists so pertinaciously, the author of "The Drama of Exile" seems to us even peculiarly without fault. The nature of her studies has, no doubt, imbued her with a very delicate instinct of constructive accuracy. The

occasional use of phrases so questionable as "from whence" and the far-fetchedness and involution of which we have already spoken, are the only noticeable blemishes of an exceedingly chaste, vigorous, and comprehensive style.

In her inattention to rhythm, Miss Barrett is guilty of an error that might have been fatal to her fame—that *would* have been fatal to any reputation less solidly founded than her own. We do not allude, so particularly, to her multiplicity of inadmissible rhymes. We would wish, to be sure, that she had not thought proper to couple Eden and succeeding—glories and floorwise—burning and morning—thither and æther—enclose me and across me—misdoers and flowers—centre and winter—guerdon and pardon—conquer and anchor—desert and unmeasured—atoms and fathoms—opal and people—glory and door-way—trumpet and accompted—taming and overcame him—coming and woman—is and trees—off and sunproof—eagles and vigils—nature and satire—poems and interflowings—certes and virtues—pardon and burden—thereat and great—children and bewildering—mortal and turtle—moonshine and sunshine. It would have been better, we say, if such apologies for rhymes as these had been rejected. But deficiencies of *rhythm* are more serious. In some cases it is nearly impossible to determine what metre is intended. "The Cry of the Children" cannot be scanned; we *never saw* so poor a specimen of verse. In imitating the rhythm of "Locksley Hall," the

poetess has preserved with accuracy (so far as mere syllables are concerned) the forcible line of seven trochees with a final cæsura. The "double rhymes" have only the force of a single long syllable—a cæsura; but the natural rhythmical division, occurring at the close of the fourth trochee, should never be forced to occur, as Miss Barrett constantly forces it, in the middle of a word, or of an indivisible phrase. If it do so occur, we must sacrifice, in perusal, either the sense or the rhythm. If she will consider, too, that this line of seven trochees and a cæsura, is nothing more than two lines written in one—a line of four trochees, succeeded by one of three trochees and a cæsura—she will at once see how unwise she has been in composing her poem in quatrains of the long line with alternate rhymes, instead of immediate ones, as in the case of "Locksley Hall." The result is, that the ear, expecting the rhymes before they occur, does not appreciate them when they do. These points, however, will be best exemplified by transcribing one of the quatrains in its *natural* arrangement. That actually employed is addressed only to the eye.

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird
  In among its forest brothers
Far too strong for it, then, drooping,
  Bowed her face upon her hands—
And I spake out wildly, fiercely,
  Brutal truths of her and others!
I, she planted in the desert,
  Swathed her, wind-like, with my sands.

Here it will be seen that there is a paucity of rhyme,

and that it is expected at closes where it does not occur. In fact, if we consider the eight lines as two independent quatrains (which they are), then we find them *entirely rhymeless.* Now so unhappy are these metrical defects—of so much importance do we take them to be, that we do not hesitate in declaring the general inferiority of the poem to its prototype to be altogether chargeable to *them.* With equal rhythm "Lady Geraldine" had been far—very far the superior poem. Inefficient rhythm is inefficient poetical expression; and expression, in poetry,—what is it?—what is it not? No one living can better answer these queries than Miss Barrett.

We conclude our comments upon her versification, by quoting (we will not say whence—from what one of her poems) a few verses without the linear division as it appears in the book. There are many readers who would never suspect the passage to be intended for metre at all. "Ay! and sometimes, on the hillside, while we sat down on the gowans, with the forest green behind us, and its shadow cast before, and the river running under, and, across it from the rowans a partridge whirring near us till we felt the air it bore—there, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the poems made by Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various of our own—read the pastoral parts of Spenser—or the subtle interflowings found in Petrarch's sonnets;—here 's the book!—the leaf is folded down!"

With this extract we make an end of our fault-finding—and *now*, shall we speak, equally in detail, of the *beauties*

of this book? Alas! here, indeed, do we feel the impotence of the pen. We have already said that the supreme excellence of the poetess whose works we review, is made up of the multitudinous sums of a world of lofty merits. It is the multiplicity—it is the *aggregation*—which excites our most profound enthusiasm, and enforces our most earnest respect. But unless we had space to extract three-fourths of the volumes, how could we convey this aggregation by specimens? We might quote, to be sure, an example of keen insight into our psychal natures, such as this:

I fell flooded with a Dark,
  In the silence of a swoon,
When I rose, still cold and stark,
  There was night,—I saw the moon;
And the stars, each in its place,
And the May-blooms on the grass,
Seemed to wonder what I was.
And I walked as if apart
  From myself when I could stand—
And I pitied my own heart,
  As if I held it in my hand
Somewhat coldly,—with a sense
Of fulfilled benevolence.

Or we might copy an instance of the purest and most radiant imagination, such as this:

So, young muser, I sat listening,
To my Fancy's wildest word—
On a sudden, through the glistening
Leaves around, a little stirred,
Came a sound, a sense of music, which was rather felt than heard.
Softly, finely, it inwound me—

From the world it shut me in—
Like a fountain falling round me
Which with silver waters thin,
Holds a little marble Naiad sitting smilingly within.

Or, again, we might extract a specimen of wild Dantesque vigor, such as this—in combination with a pathos never excelled :

Ay ! be silent—let them hear each other breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth—
Let them touch each others' hands in a fresh wreathing
Of their tender human youth !
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals—
Let them prove their inward souls against the notion
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels !

Or, still again, we might give a passage embodying the most elevated sentiment, most tersely and musically thus expressed :

And since, Prince Albert, men have called thy spirit high and rare,
And true to truth, and brave for truth, as some at Augsburg were—
We charge thee by thy lofty thoughts and by thy poet-mind,
Which not by glory or degree takes measure of mankind,
Esteem that wedded hand less dear for sceptre than for ring,
And hold her uncrowned womanhood to be the royal thing !

These passages, we say, and a hundred similar ones, exemplifying particular excellences, might be displayed, and we should still fail, as lamentably as the *skolastikos* with his brick, in conveying an idea of the vast *totality*. By no individual stars can we present the constellatory radiance of the book. *To the book* then, with implicit confidence we appeal.

That Miss Barrett, has done more, in poetry, than any woman, living or dead, will scarcely be questioned; that she has surpassed all her poetical contemporaries of either sex (with a single exception) is our deliberate opinion—not idly entertained, we think, nor founded on any visionary basis. It may not be uninteresting, therefore, in closing this examination of her claims, to determine in what manner she holds poetical relation with these contemporaries, or with her immediate predecessors, and especially with the great exception to which we have alluded,—if at all.

If ever mortal "wreaked his thoughts upon expression," it was Shelley. If ever poet sang (as a bird sings)—impulsively—earnestly—with utter abandonment—to himself solely—and for the mere joy of his own song—that poet was the author of "The Sensitive Plant." Of Art—beyond that which is the inalienable instinct of Genius—he either had little or disdained all. He *really* disdained that Rule which is the emanation from Law, because his own soul was law in itself. His rhapsodies are but the rough notes—the stenographic memoranda of poems—memoranda which, because they were all-sufficient for his own intelligence, he cared not to be at the trouble of transcribing in full for mankind. In his whole life he wrought not thoroughly out a single conception. For this reason it is that he is the most fatiguing of poets. Yet he wearies in having done too little, rather than too much; what seems in him the diffuseness of one idea,

is the conglomerate concision of many;—and this concision it is which renders him obscure. With such a man, to imitate was out of the question; it would have answered no purpose—for he spoke to his own spirit alone, which would have comprehended no alien tongue;—he was, therefore, profoundly original. His quaintness arose from intuitive perception of that truth to which Lord Verulam alone has given distinct voice:—"There is no exquisite beauty which has not some strangeness in its proportion." But whether obscure, original, or quaint, he was at all times sincere. He had no *affectations*.

From the ruins of Shelley there sprang into existence, affronting the heavens, a tottering and fantastic pagoda, in which the salient angles, tipped with mad jangling bells, were the idiosyncratic *faults* of the great original—faults which cannot be called such in view of his purposes, but which are monstrous when we regard his works as addressed to mankind. A "school" arose—if that absurd term must still be employed—a school—a system of rules—upon the basis of the Shelley who had none. Young men innumerable, dazzled with the glare and bewildered with the *bizarrerie* of the divine lightning that flickered through the clouds of the Prometheus, had no trouble whatever in heaping up imitative vapors, but, for the lightning, were content, perforce, with its *spectrum*, in which the *bizarrerie* appeared without the fire. Nor were great and mature minds unimpressed by the contemplation of a greater and more mature; and thus gradually

were interwoven into this school of all lawlessness—of obscurity, quaintness, exaggeration—the misplaced didacticism of Wordsworth, and the even more preposterously anomalous metaphysicianism of Coleridge. Matters were now fast verging to their worst, and at length, in Tennyson, poetic inconsistency attained its extreme. But it was precisely this extreme (for the greatest error and the greatest truth are scarcely two points in a circle)—it was this extreme which, following the law of all extremes, wrought in him—in Tennyson—a natural and inevitable revulsion, leading him first to contemn and secondly to investigate his early manner, and finally, to winnow from its magnificent elements the truest and purest of all poetical styles. But not even yet is the process complete; and for this reason in part, but chiefly on account of the mere fortuitousness of that mental and moral combination which shall unite in one person (if *ever* it shall) the Shelleyan *abandon*, the Tennysonian poetic sense, the most profound instinct of Art, and the sternest Will properly to blend and vigorously to control all,—chiefly, we say, because such combination of antagonisms must be purely fortuitous, has the world never yet seen the noblest of the poems of which it is *possible* that it may be put in possession.

And yet Miss Barrett has narrowly missed the fulfilment of these conditions. Her poetic inspiration is the highest—we can conceive nothing more august. Her sense of Art is pure in itself, but has been contaminated by pedantic study of false models—a study which has the more

easily led her astray, because she placed an undue value upon it as rare—as alien to her character of woman. The accident of having been long secluded by ill health from the world has affected, moreover, in her behalf, what an innate recklessness did for Shelley—has imparted to her, if not precisely that *abandon* to which I have referred, at least a something that stands well in its stead—a comparative independence of men and opinions with which she did not come personally in contact—a happy audacity of thought and expression never before known in one of her sex. It is, however, this same accident of ill health, perhaps, which has invalidated her original Will—diverted her from proper individuality of purpose—and seduced her into the sin of imitation. Thus, what she might have done, we cannot altogether determine. What she has actually accomplished is before us. With Tennyson's works beside her, and a keen appreciation of them in her soul—appreciation too keen to be discriminative; —with an imagination even more vigorous than his, although somewhat less ethereally delicate; with inferior art and more feeble volition; she has written poems such as he *could not write*, but such as he, under *her* conditions of ill health and seclusion, *would have written* during the epoch of his pupildom in that school which arose out of Shelley, and from which, over a disgustful gulf of utter incongruity and absurdity, lit only by miasmatic flashes, into the broad open meadows of Natural Art and Divine Genius, he—Tennyson—is at once the bridge and the transition.

R. H. HORNE.*

MR. R. H. HORNE, the author of the "Orion," has, of late years, acquired a high and extensive *home* reputation, although, as yet, he is only partially known in America. He will be remembered, however, as the author of a very well-written introduction to Black's translation of Schlegel's "Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature," and as a contributor with Wordsworth, Hunt, Miss Barrett, and others, to "Chaucer Modernized." He is the author, also, of "Cosmo de Medici," of "The Death of Marlowe," and, especially, of "Gregory the Seventh," a fine tragedy, prefaced with an "Essay on Tragic Influence." "Orion" was originally advertised to be sold for *a farthing;* and, at this price, three large editions were actually sold. The fourth edition (a specimen of which now lies before us) was issued at a shilling, and also *sold.* A fifth is promised at half a crown; this likewise, with even a sixth at a crown, may be disposed of—partly through the intrinsic merit of the work itself—but

* "Orion: An Epic Poem in Three Books." By R. H. Horne. Fourth Edition. London: Published by J. Miller.

chiefly through the ingenious novelty of the original price.

We have been among the earliest readers of Mr. Horne—among the most earnest admirers of his high genius;—for a man of high, of the highest genius, he unquestionably is. With an eager wish to do justice to his "Gregory the Seventh," we have never yet found exactly that opportunity we desired. Meantime, we looked, with curiosity, for what the British critics would say of a work which, in the boldness of its conception, and in the fresh originality of its management, would necessarily fall beyond the *routine* of their customary verbiage. We saw nothing, however, that either could or should be understood—nothing, certainly, that was worth understanding. The tragedy itself was, unhappily, not devoid of the ruling cant of the day, and its critics (that cant incarnate) took their cue from some of its infected passages, and proceeded forthwith to rhapsody and æsthetics, by way of giving a common-sense public an intelligent idea of the book. By the "cant of the day" we mean the disgusting practice of putting on the airs of an owl, and endeavoring to look miraculously wise;—the affectation of second sight—of a species of ecstatic prescience—of an intensely bathetic penetration into all sorts of mysteries, psychological ones in especial;—an Orphic—an ostrich affectation, which burries its head in balderdash, and, seeing nothing itself, fancies, therefore, that its preposterous carcass is not a visible object of derision for the world at large.

Of "Orion" itself, we have, as yet, seen few notices in the British periodicals, and these few are merely repetitions of the old jargon. All that has been said, for example, might be summed up in some such paragraph as this:

"'Orion' is the *earnest* outpouring of the oneness of the psychological MAN. It has the individuality of the true SINGLENESS. It is not to be regarded as a Poem, but as a WORK—as a multiple THEOGONY—as a manifestation of the WORKS and the DAYS. It is a pinion in the PROGRESS—a wheel in the MOVEMENT that moveth ever and goeth always—a mirror of SELF-INSPECTION, held up by the SEER of the Age essential—of the Age *in esse*—for the SEERS of the Ages possible—*in posse*. We hail a brother in the work."

Of the mere opinions of the donkeys who bray thus—of their mere dogmas and doctrines, literary, æsthetical, or what not—we know little, and, upon our honor, we wish to know less. Occupied, Laputically, in their great work of a progress that never progresses, we take it for granted, also, that they care as little about ours. But whatever the opinions of these people may be—however portentous the "IDEA" which they have been so long threatening to "evolve"—we still think it clear that they take a very round-about way of evolving it. The use of language is in the promulgation of thought. If a man—if an Orphicist—or a SEER—or whatever else he may choose to call himself, while the rest of the world calls him an ass—if this gentleman have an idea which he does not under-

stand himself, the best thing he can do is to say nothing about it; for, of course, he can entertain no hope that what he, the SEER, cannot comprehend, should be comprehended by the mass of common humanity; but if he have an idea which is actually intelligible to himself, and if he sincerely wishes to render it intelligible to others, we then hold it as indisputable that he should employ those forms of speech which are the best adapted to further his object. He should speak to the people in that people's ordinary tongue. He should arrange words such as are habitually employed for the several preliminary and introductory ideas to be conveyed—he should arrange them in collocations such as those in which we are accustomed to see those words arranged.

But to all this the Orphicist thus replies: "I am a SEER. My IDEA—the idea which by providence I am especially commissioned to evolve—is one so vast—so novel—that ordinary words, in ordinary collocations, will be insufficient for its comfortable evolution." Very true. We grant the vastness of the IDEA—it is manifested in the sucking of the thumb—but, then, if *ordinary* language be insufficient—ordinary language which men understand —*a fortiori* will be insufficient that inordinate language which no man has *ever* understood, and which any well-educated baboon would blush in being accused of understanding. The "SEER," therefore has no other resource but to oblige mankind by holding his tongue, suffering his IDEA to remain quietly "unevolved," until some Mes-

meric mode of intercommunication shall be invented, whereby the antipodal brains of the SEER and of the man of Common-Sense shall be brought into the necessary *rapport*. Meantime we earnestly ask if *bread-and-butter* be the vast IDEA in question—if *bread-and-butter* be any portion of this vast IDEA? for we have often observed that when a SEER has to speak of even so usual a thing as bread-and-butter, he can never be induced to mention it outright. He will, if you choose, say any thing and every thing *but* bread-and-butter. He will consent to hint at buckwheat cake. He may even accommodate you so far as to insinuate oatmeal porridge—but, if bread-and-butter be really the matter intended, we never yet met the Orphicist who could get out the three individual words "bread-and-butter."

We have already said that "Gregory the Seventh" was unhappily infected with the customary cant of the day—the cant of the muddle-pates who dishonor a profound and ennobling philosophy by styling themselves transcendentalists. In fact, there are few highly sensitive or imaginative intellects for which the vortex of *mysticism*, in any shape, has not an almost irresistible influence, on account of the shadowy confines which separate the Unknown from the Sublime. Mr. Horne, then, is, in some measure, infected. The success of his previous works has led him to attempt, zealously, the production of a poem which should be worthy his high powers. We have no doubt that he revolved carefully in mind a variety of august

conceptions, and from these thoughtfully selected what his judgment, rather than what his impulses, designated as the noblest and the best. In a word, he has weakly yielded his own poetic sentiment of the poetic—yielded it, in some degree, to the pertinacious opinion, and *talk*, of a certain junto by which he is surrounded—a junto of dreamers whose absolute intellect may, perhaps, compare with his own very much after the fashion of an ant-hill with the Andes. By this talk—by its continuity rather than by any other quality it possessed—he has been badgered into the attempt at commingling the obstinate oils and waters of Poetry and of Truth. He has been so far blinded as to permit himself to imagine that a maudlin philosophy (granting it to be worth enforcing) could be enforced by poetic imagery, and illustrated by the jingling of rhythm; or, more unpardonably, he has been induced to believe that a poem, whose single object is the creation of Beauty—the novel collocation of old forms of the Beautiful and of the Sublime—could be advanced by the abstractions of a maudlin philosophy.

But the question is not even this. It is not whether it be not possible to introduce didacticism, with effect, into a poem, or possible to introduce poetical images and measures, with effect, into a didactic essay. To do either the one or the other would be merely to surmount a difficulty—would be simply a feat of literary sleight of hand. But the true question is, whether the author who shall attempt either feat, will not be laboring

at a disadvantage—will not be guilty of a fruitless and wasteful expenditure of energy. In minor poetical efforts, we may not so imperatively demand an adherence to the true poetical thesis. We permit *trifling* to some extent, in a work which we consider a trifle at best. Although we agree, for example, with Coleridge, that poetry and *passion* are discordant, yet we are willing to permit Tennyson to bring, to the intense *passion* which prompted his "Locksley Hall," the aid of that terseness and pungency which are derivable from rhythm and from rhyme. The effect he produces, however, is a purely passionate, and not, unless in detached passages of this magnificent philippic, a properly poetic, effect. His "Œnone," on the other hand, exalts the soul not into passion, but into a conception of pure *beauty*, which in its elevation—its calm and intense rapture—has in it a foreshadowing of the future and spiritual life, and as far transcends earthly passion as the holy radiance of the sun does the glimmering and feeble phosphorescence of the glowworm. His "Morte D'Arthur" is in the same majestic vein. The "Sensitive Plant" of Shelley is in the same sublime spirit. Nor, if the passionate poems of Byron excite more intensely a greater number of readers than either the "Œnone" or the "Sensitive Plant," does this indisputable fact prove any thing more than that the majority of mankind are more susceptible of the impulses of passion than of the impressions of beauty. Readers do exist, however, and always will exist, who, to hearts of maddening fervor,

unite, in perfection, the sentiment of the beautiful—that divine sixth sense which is yet so faintly understood—that sense which phrenology has attempted to embody in its organ of *ideality*—that sense which is the basis of all Cousin's dreams—that sense which speaks of GOD through his purest, if not his *sole*, attribute—which proves, and which alone proves, his existence.

To readers such as these—and only to such as these—must be left the decision of what the true poesy is. And these, with *no* hesitation, will decide that the origin of poetry lies in a thirst for a wilder beauty than earth supplies; that poetry itself is the imperfect effort to quench this immortal thirst by novel combinations of beautiful forms (collocations of forms), physical or spiritual, and that this thirst when even partially allayed—this sentiment when even feebly meeting response—produces emotion to which all other human emotions are vapid and insignificant.

We shall now be fully understood. If, with Coleridge, who, however erring at times, was precisely the mind fitted to decide a question such as this—if, with him, we reject *passion* from the true, from the pure poetry—if we reject even passion—if we discard as feeble, as unworthy the high spirituality of the theme (which has its origin in a sense of the Godhead)—if we dismiss even the nearly divine emotion of human *love*—that emotion which, merely to name, causes the pen to tremble—with how much greater reason shall we dismiss all else? And yet there

are men who would mingle with the august theme the merest questions of expediency—the cant topics of the day—the doggerel æsthetics of the time—who would trammel the soul in its flight to an ideal Helusion, by the quirks and quibbles of chopped logic. There are men who do this—lately there are a set of men who make a practice of doing this—and who defend it on the score of the advancement of what they suppose to be *truth*. Truth is, in its own essence, sublime, but her loftiest sublimity, as derived from man's clouded and erratic reason, is valueless—is pulseless—is utterly ineffective when brought into comparison with the unerring *sense* of which we speak; yet grant this *truth* to be all which its seekers and worshippers pretend, they forget that it is not truth *per se*, which is made their thesis, but an *argumentation*, often maudlin and pedantic, always shallow and unsatisfactory (as from the mere inadaptation of the vehicle it *must* be), by which this *truth*, in casual and indeterminate glimpses, is—*or is not*—rendered manifest.

We have said that, in minor poetical efforts, we may tolerate some deflection from the true poetical thesis; but when a man of the highest powers sets himself seriously to the task of constructing what shall be most worthy those powers, we expect that he shall so choose his theme as to render it certain that he labor not at disadvantage. We regret to see any trivial or partial imperfection of detail; but we grieve deeply when we detect any radical error of conception

In setting about "Orion," Mr. Horne proposed to himself (in accordance with the views of his junto) to "elaborate a morality"; he ostensibly proposed this to himself —for, in the depths of his heart, we *know* that he wished all juntos and all moralities in Erebus. In accordance with the notions of this *set*, however, he felt a species of shamefacedness in not making the enforcement of some certain dogmas or doctrines (questionable or unquestionable) about PROGRESS the obvious or apparent object of his poem. This shamefacedness is the cue to the concluding sentence of the preface. "Meantime, the design of this poem of 'Orion' is far from being intended as a mere echo or reflection of the past, and is, in itself, and in other respects, a novel experiment upon the mind of a nation." Mr. Horne conceived, in fact, that to compose a poem merely for that poem's sake—and to acknowledge such to be his purpose—would be to subject himself to the charge of imbecility—of triviality—of deficiency in the true dignity and force; but had he listened to the dictates of his own soul, he could not have failed to perceive, at once, that under the sun there exists no work more intrinsically noble, than this very poem *written solely for the poem's sake.*

But let us regard "Orion" as it is. It has an under and an upper current of meaning; in other words, it is an allegory. But the poet's sense of fitness (which, under no circumstances of mere conventional opinion, could be more than half subdued) has so far softened this allegory

as to keep it, generally, well subject to the ostensible narrative. The purport of the moral conveyed is by no means clear, showing conclusively that the heart of the poet was not with it. It vacillates. At one time a certain set of opinions predominate—then another. We may generalize the subject, however, by calling it a homily against supineness or apathy in the cause of human PROGRESS, and in favor of energetic action for the good of the race. This is precisely *the* IDEA of the present school of canters. How feebly the case is made out in the poem—how insufficient has been all Mr. Horne's poetical rhetoric in convincing even himself—may be gleaned from the unusual bombast, rigmarole, and mystification of the concluding paragraph, in which he has thought it necessary to say something *very* profound, by way of putting the sting to his epigram,—the point to his moral. The words put us much in mind of the "nonsense verses" of Du Bartas.

> And thus, in the end each soul may to itself,
> With truth before it as its polar guide,
> Become both Time and Nature, whose fixt paths
> Are spiral, and when lost will find new stars,
> And in the universal MOVEMENT join :

The upper-current of the theme is based upon the various Greek fables about Orion. The author, in his brief preface, speaks about "writing from an old Greek fable," but his story is, more properly, a very judicious selection and modification of a great variety of Greek and Roman fables concerning Orion and other personages with whom these fables bring Orion in collision. And here

we have only to object that the really magnificent abilities of Mr. Horne might have been better employed in an entirely original conception. The story he tells is beautiful indeed,—and *nil tetigit*, certainly, *quod non ornavit*—but our memories—our classic recollections are continually at war with his claims to regard, and we too often find ourselves rather speculating upon what he might have done, than admiring what he has really accomplished.

The narrative, as our poet has arranged it, runs nearly thus: Orion, hunting on foot amid the mountains of Chios, encounters Artemis (Diana) with her train. The goddess, at first indignant at the giant's intrusion upon her grounds, becomes, in the second place, enamoured. Her pure love spiritualizes the merely animal nature of Orion, but does not render him happy. He is filled with vague aspirations and desires. He buries himself in sensual pleasures. In the mad dreams of intoxication, he beholds a vision of Merope, the daughter of Œnopion, King of Chios. She is the type of physical beauty. She cries in his ear: "Depart from Artemis! She loves thee not; thou art too full of earth." Awaking, he seeks the love of Merope. It is returned. Œnopion, dreading the giant and his brethren, yet scorning his pretensions, temporizes. He consents to bestow upon Orion the hand of Merope, on condition of the island being cleared, within six days, of its savage beasts and serpents. Orion, seeking the aid of his brethren, accomplishes the task. Œnopion again hesitates. Enraged, the giants make war upon him,

and carry off the princess. In a remote grove Orion lives, in bliss, with his earthly love. From this delirium of happiness, he is aroused by the vengeance of Œnopion, who causes him to be surprised while asleep, and deprived of sight. The princess, being retaken, immediately forgets and deserts her lover, who, in his wretchedness, seeks, at the suggestion of a shepherd, the aid of Eos (Aurora) who, also becoming enamoured of him, restores his sight. The love of Eos, less earthly than that of Merope, less cold than that of Artemis, fully satisfies his soul. He is at length happy. But the jealousy of Artemis destroys him. She pierces him with her arrows while in the very act of gratefully renovating her temple at Delos. In despair, Eos flies to Artemis, reproves her, represents to her the baseness of her jealousy and revenge, softens her, and obtains her consent to unite with herself—with Eos—in a prayer to Zeus (Jupiter) for the restoration of the giant to life. The prayer is heard. Orion is not only restored to life, but rendered immortal, and placed among the constellations, where he enjoys forever the pure affection of Eos, and becomes extinguished each morning, in her rays.

In ancient mythology, the giants are meant to typify various energies of Nature. Pursuing, we suppose, this idea, Mr. Horne has made his own giants represent certain principles of human action or passion. Thus Orion himself is the Worker or Builder, and is the type of Action or Movement itself; but, in various portions of

the poem, this allegorical character is left out of sight, and that of speculative philosophy takes its place; a mere consequence of the general uncertainty of purpose, which is the chief defect of the work. Sometimes we even find Orion a Destroyer, in place of a Builder; as, for example, when he destroys the grove about the temple of Artemis, at Delos. Here he usurps the proper allegorial attribute of Rhexergon, (the second of the seven giants named,) who is the Breaker-down, typifying the Revolutionary Principle. Autarces, the third, represents the Mob, or, more strictly, Waywardness — Capricious Action. Harpax, the fourth, serves for Rapine; Briastor, the fifth, for Brute Force; Encolyon, the sixth, the "Chainer of the Wheel," for Conservatism; and Akinetos, the seventh, and most elaborated, for Apathy. He is termed "The Great Unmoved," and in his mouth is put all the "worldly wisdom," or selfishness, of the tale. The philosophy of Akinetos is, that no merely human exertion has any appreciable effect upon the *Movement;* and it is amusing to perceive how this great *Truth* (for most sincerely do we hold it to be such) speaks out from the real heart of the poet, through his Akinetos, in spite of all endeavor to overthrow it by the example of the brighter fate of Orion.

The death of Akinetos is a singularly forcible and poetic conception, and will serve to show how the giants are made to perish, generally, during the story, in agreement with their allegorical natures. The "Great Un-

moved" quietly seats himself in a cave after the death of all his brethren, except Orion.

> Thus Akinetos sat from day to day,
> Absorbed in indolent sublimity,
> Reviewing thoughts and knowledge o'er and o'er;
> And now he spake, now sang unto himself,
> Now sank to brooding silence. From above,
> While passing, Time the rock touch'd, and it oozed
> Petrific drops—gently at first and slow.
> Reclining lonely in his fixed repose,
> The Great Unmoved unconsciously became
> Attached to that he pressed; and soon a part
> Of the rock. *There clung th' excrescence, till strong hands,*
> *Descended from Orion, made large roads,*
> *And built steep walls, squaring down rocks for use.*

The italicized conclusion of this fine passage affords an instance, however, of a very blameable concision, too much affected throughout the poem.

In the deaths of Autarces, Harpax, and Encolyon, we recognize the same exceeding vigor of conception. These giants conspire against Orion, who seeks the aid of Artemis, who, in her turn, seeks the assistance of Phoibos (Phœbus). The conspirators are in a cave, with Orion.

> Now Phoibus thro' the cave
> Sent a broad ray! and lo! the solar beam
> Filled the great cave with radiance equable,
> And not a cranny held one speck of shade.
> A moony halo round Orion came,
> As of some pure protecting influence,
> While with intense light glared the walls and roof.
> The heat increasing. The three giants stood
> With glazing eyes, fixed. Terribly the light
> Beat on the dazzled stone, and the cave hummed
> With reddening heat, till the red hair and beard

Of Harpax showed no difference from the rest,
Which once were iron-black. The sullen walls
Then smouldered down to steady oven heat,
Like that with care attain'd when bread has ceased
Its steaming and displays an angry tan.
The appalled faces of the giants showed
Full consciousness of their immediate doom.
And soon the cave a potter's furnace glow'd
Or kiln for largest bricks, and thus remained
The while Orion, in his halo clasped
By some invisible power, beheld the clay
Of these his early friends change. Life was gone.
Now sank the heat—the cave-walls lost their glare,
The red lights faded, and the halo pale
Around him into chilly air expanded.
There stood the three great images, in hue
Of chalky white and red, like those strange shapes
In Egypt's ancient tombs ; but presently
Each visage and each form with cracks and flaws
Was seamed, and the lost countenance brake up,
As, with brief toppling, forward prone they fell.

The deaths of Rhexergon and Biastor seem to discard (and this we regret not) the allegorical meaning altogether, but are related with even more exquisite richness and delicacy of imagination than those of the other giants, Upon this occasion it is the *jealousy* of Artemis which destroys.

——— But with the eve
Fatigue o'ercame the giants, and they slept.
Dense were the rolling clouds, starless the glooms ;
But o'er a narrow rift, once drawn apart,
Showing a field remote of violet hue,
The high Moon floated, and her downward gleam
Shone on the upturned giant faces. Rigid
Each upper feature, loose the nether jaw ;
Their arms cast wide with open palms ; their chests
Heaving like some large engine. Near them lay

Their bloody clubs, with dust and hair begrimed,
Their spears and girdles, and the long-noosed thongs.
Artemis vanished ; all again was dark.
With day's first streak Orion rose, and loudly
To his companions called. But still they slept.
Again he shouted ; yet no limb they stirred,
Tho' scarcely seven strides distant. He approached,
And found the spot, so sweet with clover flower
When they had cast them down, was now arrayed
With many-headed poppies, like a crowd
Of dusky Ethiops in a magic cirque
Which had sprung up beneath them in the night.
And all entranced the air.

There are several minor defects in "Orion," and we may as well mention them here. We sometimes meet with an instance of bad taste in a revolting picture or image ; for example, at page 59, of this edition :

Naught fearing, swift, brimful of raging life,
Stiff'ning they lay in pools of jellied gore.

Sometimes—indeed very often—we encounter an altogether purposeless oddness or foreignness of speech. For example, at page 78 :

As in Dodona once, ere driven thence
By Zeus *for that* Rhexergon burnt some oaks.

Mr. Horne will find it impossible to assign a good reason for not here using "because."

Pure *vaguenesses* of speech abound. For example, page 89 :

—— One central heart wherein
Time beats twin pulses with Humanity.

Now and then sentences are rendered needlessly obscure through mere involution ; as at page 103 :

> Star-rays that first played o'er my blinded orbs,
> E'en as they glance above the lids of sleep,
> Who else had never known surprise, nor hope,
> Nor useful action.

Here the "who" has no grammatical antecedent, and would naturally be referred to sleep; whereas it is intended for "me," understood, or involved, in the pronoun "my"; as if the sentence were written thus: "rays that first played o'er the blinded orbs of me, who," etc. It is useless to dwell upon so pure an affectation.

The versification throughout is, generally, of a very remarkable excellence. At times, however, it is rough, to no purpose; as at page 44:

> And ever tended to some central point
> *In some place—nought more could I understand.*

And here, at page 81:

> The shadow of a stag stoops to the stream
> *Swift rolling toward the cataract and drinks deeply.*

The above is an unintentional and false Alexandrine—including a foot too much, and that a trochee in place of an iambus. But here, at page 106, we have the utterly unjustifiable anomaly of half a foot too little:

> *And Eos ever rises circling*
> The varied regions of mankind, etc.

All these are mere inadvertences, of course; for the general handling of the rhythm shows the profound metrical sense of the poet. He is, perhaps, somewhat too fond of "making the sound an echo to the sense." "Orion"

embodies some of the most remarkable instances of this on record; but if smoothness—if the true rhythm of a verse be sacrificed, the sacrifice is an error. The effect is only a beauty, we think, where *no* sacrifice is made in its behalf. It will be found possible to reconcile *all* the objects in view. Nothing can justify such lines as this, at page 69:

> As snake-songs 'midst stone hollows thus has taught me.

We might urge, as another minor objection, that all the giants are made to speak in the same manner—with the same phraseology. Their characters are broadly distinctive, while their words are identical in spirit. There is sufficient individuality of sentiment, but little, or none, of language.

We *must* object, too, to the personal and political allusions—to the Corn-Law question, for example—to Wellington's statue, etc. These things, *of course*, have no business in a poem.

We will conclude our fault-finding with the remark that, as a consequence of the one radical error of conception upon which we have commented at length, the reader's attention, throughout, is painfully *diverted*. He is always pausing, amid poetical beauties, in the expectation of detecting among them some philosophical, allegorical moral. Of course, he does not fully, because he cannot uniquely, appreciate the beauties. The absolute necessity of reperusing the poem, in order thoroughly to comprehend it,

is also, most surely, to be regretted, and arises, likewise, from the one radical sin.

But of the *beauties* of this most remarkable poem, what shall we say? And here we find it a difficult task to be calm. And yet we have never been accused of enthusiastic encomium. It is our deliberate opinion that, in all that regards the loftiest and holiest attributes of the true Poetry, "Orion" has *never* been excelled. Indeed, we feel strongly inclined to say that it has never been *equalled*. Its imagination—that quality which is all in all—is of the most refined, the most elevating, the most august character. And here we deeply regret that the necessary limits of this review will prevent us from entering, at length, into specification. In reading the poem, we marked passage after passage for extract—but, in the end, we found that we had marked nearly every passage in the book. We can now do nothing more than select a few. This, from page 3, introduces Orion himself, and we quote it, not only as an instance of refined and picturesque imagination, but as evincing the high artistical skill with which a scholar in spirit can paint an elaborate picture by a few brief touches.

> The scene in front two sloping mountains' sides
> Displayed; in shadow one and one in light.
> The loftiest on its summit now sustained
> The sunbeams, raying like a mighty wheel
> Half seen, which left the forward surface dark
> In its full breadth of shade; the coming sun
> Hidden as yet behind; the other mount,
> Slanting transverse, swept with an eastward face,

Catching the golden light. Now while the peal
Of the ascending chase told that the rout
Still midway rent the thickets, suddenly
Along the broad and sunny slope appeared
The shadow of a stag that fled across
Followed by a giant's shadow with a spear.

These shadows are those of the coming Orion and his game. But who can fail to appreciate the intense beauty of the heralding shadows? Nor is this all. This "Hunter of shadows, he himself a shade," is made symbolical, or suggestive, throughout the poem, of the speculative character of Orion; and occasionally, of his pursuit of visionary happiness. For example, at page 81, Orion, possessed of Merope, dwells with her in a remote and dense grove of cedars. Instead of directly describing his attained happiness—his perfected bliss—the poet, with an exalted sense of Art, *for which we look utterly in vain in any other poem*, merely introduces the image of the tamed or subdued *shadow-stag*, quietly browsing and drinking beneath the cedars.

There, underneath the boughs, mark where the gleam
Of sun-rise thro' the roofing's chasm is thrown
Upon a grassy plot below, whereon
The shadow of a stag stoops to the stream,
Swift rolling toward the cataract, and drinks.
Throughout the day unceasingly it drinks,
While ever and anon the nightingale,
Not waiting for the evening, swells his hymn—
His one sustained and heaven-aspiring tone—
And when the sun had vanished utterly,
Arm over arm the cedars spread their shade,
With arching wrist and long extended hands,
And grave-ward fingers lengthening in the moon,

Above that shadowy stag whose antlers still
Hung o'er the stream.

There is nothing more richly, more weirdly, more chastely, more sublimely imaginative in the wide realm of poetical literature. It will be seen that we *have* enthusiasm—but we reserve it for pictures such as this.

At page 62, Orion, his brethren dead, is engaged alone in extirpating the beasts from Chios. In the passages we quote, observe, in the beginning, the singular *lucidness* of detail; the arrangement of the barriers, etc., by which the hunter accomplishes his purpose, is given in a dozen lines of verse, with far more perspicuity than ordinary writers could give it in as many pages of prose. In this species of narration Mr. Horne is approached only by Moore in his "Alciphron." In the latter portions of our extract observe the vivid picturesqueness of the description.

Four days remain. Fresh trees he felled and wove
More barriers and fences; inaccessible
To fiercest charge of droves, and to o'erleap
Impossible. These walls he so arranged
That to a common centre each should force
The flight of those pursued; and from that centre
Diverged three outlets. One, the wide expanse
Which from the rocks and inland forests led;
One was the clear-skyed windy gap above
A precipice; the third, a long ravine
Which through steep slopes, down to the sea-shore ran
Winding, and then direct into the sea.

Two days remain. Orion, in each hand
Waving a torch, his course at night began,
Through wildest haunts and lairs of savage beasts.

With long-drawn howl, before him trooped the wolves—
The panthers, terror-stricken, and the bears
With wonder and gruff rage ; from desolate crags,
Leering hyenas, griffin, hippogrif,
Skulked, or sprang madly, as the tossing brands
Flashed through the midnight nooks and hollows cold,
Sudden as fire from flint ; o'er crashing thickets,
With crouched head and curled fangs dashed the wild boar
Gnashing forth on with reckless impulses,
While the clear-purposed fox crept closely down
Into the underwood, to let the storm,
Whate'er its cause, pass over. Through dark fens,
Marshes, green rushy swamps, and margins reedy,
Orion held his way—and rolling shapes
Of serpent and of dragon moved before him
With high-reared crests, swan-like yet terrible,
And often looking back with gem-like eyes.

All night Orion urged his rapid course
In the vex'd rear of the swift-droving din,
And when the dawn had peered, the monsters all
Were hemmed in barriers. These he now o'erheaped
With fuel through the day, and when again
Night darkened, and the sea a gulf-like voice
Sent forth, the barriers at all points he fired,
'Mid prayers to Hephæstos and his Ocean-Sire.
Soon as the flames had eaten out a gap
In the great barrier fronting the ravine
That ran down to the sea, Orion grasped
Two blazing boughs ; one high in air he raised,
The other, *with its roaring foliage trailed*
Behind him as he sped. Onward the droves
Of frantic creatures with one impulse rolled
Before this night-devouring thing of flames,
With multitudinous voice and downward sweep
Into the sea, which now first knew a tide,
And, ere they made one effort to regain
The shore, had caught them in its flowing arms,
And bore them past all hope. The living mass,
Dark heaving o'er the waves resistlessly,

At length, in distance, seemed a circle small,
'Midst which one creature in the centre rose,
Conspicuous in the long, red quivering gleams
That from the dying brands streamed o'er the waves.
It was the oldest dragon of the fens,
Whose forky flag-wings and horn-crested head
O'er crags and marshes regal sway had held;
And now he rose up like an embodied curse,
From all the doomed, fast sinking—some just sunk,—
Looked landward o'er the sea, and flapped his vans,
Until Poseidon drew them swirling down.

Poseidon (Neptune) is Orion's father, and lends him his aid. The first line italicized is an example of sound made echo to sense. The rest we have merely emphasized as peculiarly imaginative.

At page 9, Orion thus describes a palace built by him for Hephæstos (Vulcan):

But, ere a shadow-hunter I became—
A dreamer of strange dreams by day and night—
For him I built a palace underground,
Of iron, black and rough as his own hands.
Deep in the groaning disembowelled earth,
The tower-broad pillars and huge stanchions,
And slant supporting wedges I set up,
Aided by the Cyclops who obeyed my voice,
Which through the metal fabric rang and pealed
In orders echoing far, like thunder-dreams.
With arches, galleries, and domes all carved—
So that great figures started from the roof
And lofty coignes, or sat and downward gazed
On those who stood below and gazed above—
I filled it; in the centre framed a hall;
Central in that, a throne; *and for the light,*
Forged mighty hammers that should rise and fall
On slanted rocks of granite and of flint,
Worked by a torrent, for whose passage down

A chasm I hewed. And here the God could take,
'Midst showery sparks and swathes of broad gold fire,
His lone repose, lulled by the sounds he loved;
Or, casting back the hammer-heads till they choked
The water's course, enjoy, if so he wished,
Midnight tremendous, silence, and iron sleep.

The description of the Hell in "Paradise Lost" is *altogether inferior* in graphic effect, in originality, in expression, in the true imagination, to these magnificent—to these unparalleled passages. For this assertion there are tens of thousands who will condemn us as heretical; but there are a "chosen few" who will feel, in their inmost souls, the simple truth of the assertion. The former class would at least be silent, could they form even a remote conception of *that* contempt with which we hearken to their conventional jargon.

We have room for no further extracts of length; but we refer the reader who shall be so fortunate as to procure a copy of "Orion," to a passage at page 22, commencing—

One day at noontide, when the chase was done.

It is descriptive of a group of lolling hounds, intermingled with sylvans, fawns, nymphs, and oceanides. We refer him also to page 25, where Orion, enamoured of the naked beauty of Artemis, is repulsed and *frozen* by her dignity. These lines end thus:

And ere the last collected shape he saw
Of Artemis, dispersing fast amid
Dense vapory clouds, the aching wintriness
Had risen to his teeth, and fixed his eyes,
Like glistening stones in the congealing air.

We refer, especially, too, to the description of *Love*, at page 29; to that of a Bacchanalian orgy, at page 34; to that of drought succeeded by rain, at page 70; and to that of the palace of Eos, at page 104.

Mr. Horne has a very peculiar and very delightful faculty of enforcing, or giving vitality to a picture, by some one vivid and intensely characteristic point or touch. He seizes the most salient feature of his theme, and makes this feature convey the whole. The combined *näiveté* and picturesqueness of some of the passages thus enforced cannot be sufficiently admired. For example:

> The archers soon
> *With bow-arm forward thrust*, on all sides twanged
> Around, above, below.

Now, it is this thrusting forward of the bow-arm which is the idiosyncrasy of the action of a mass of archers. Again: Rhexergon and his friends endeavor to persuade Akinetos to be king. Observe the silent refusal of Akinetos—the peculiar *passiveness* of his action—if we may be permitted the paradox:

> "Rise, therefore, Akinetos, thou art king."
> So saying, in his hand he placed a spear.
> *As though against a wall 't were sent aslant,*
> *Flatly the long spear fell upon the ground.*

Here again: Merope departs from Chios in a ship.

> And, as it sped along, she closely pressed
> The rich globes of her bosom on the side
> O'er which she bent with those black eyes, and gazed
> Into the sea *that fled beneath her face.*

The fleeing of the sea beneath the face of one who gazes into it from a ship's side, is the idiosyncrasy of the action—of the subject. It is that which chiefly impresses the gazer.

We conclude with some brief quotations at random, which we shall not pause to classify. Their merits need no demonstration. They *gleam* with the purest imagination. They abound in picturesqueness—force—happily chosen epithets, each in itself a picture. They are redolent of all for which a poet will value a poem.

—— Her silver sandals glanc'd i' the rays,
As doth a lizard playing on the hill,
And on the spot where she that instant stood
Naught but the bent and quivering grass was seen.

Above the Isle of Chios, night by night,
The clear moon lingered ever on her course
Covering the forest foliage, where it swept
In its unbroken breadth along the slopes,
With placid silver ; edging leaf and trunk
Where gloom clung deep around ; but chiefly sought
With melancholy splendor to illume
The dark-mouthed caverns where Orion lay,
Dreaming among his kinsmen.

The ocean realm below, and all its caves
And bristling vegetation, plant and flower,
And forests in their dense petrific shade,
Where the tides moan for sleep that never comes.

A fawn, who on a quiet green knoll sat
Somewhat apart, sang a melodious ode,
Made rich by harmonies of hidden strings.

Autarces seized a satyr, with intent,
Despite his writhing freaks and furious face,

To dash him on a gong, like that amidst
The struggling mass Encolyon thrust a pine,
Heavy and black as Charon's ferrying pole,
O'er which they, *like a bursting billow*, fell.

—— then round the blaze,
Their shadows brandishing afar and athwart
Over the level space and up the hills,
Six giants held portentous dance.

—— his safe return
To corporal sense, by shaking off these nets
Of moonbeams from his soul.

—— old memories
Slumbrously hung above the purple line
Of distance, to the East, while odorously
Glistened the tear-drops of a new fall'n shower.

Sing on !
Sing on, great tempest ! in the darkness sing !
Thy madness is a music that brings calm
Into my central soul ; and from its waves,
That now with joy begin to heave and gush,
The burning image of all life's desire,
Like an absorbing, fire-breathed, phantom god,
Rises and floats ! here touching on the foam,
There hovering o'er it ; *ascending swift*
Starward then sweeping down the hemisphere
Upon the lengthening javelins of the blast !

Now a sound we heard,
Like to some well-known voice in prayer ; and next
An iron clang, *that* seemed to break great bonds
Beneath the earth, shook us to conscious life.

It is Oblivion ! In his hand—though naught
Knows he of this—a dusky purple flower
Droops over its tall stem. Again ! ah see !
He wanders into mist and now is lost !—
Within his brain what lovely realms of death

Are pictured, *and what knowledge through the doors*
Of his forgetfulness of all the earth
A path may gain?

But we are positively forced to conclude. It was our design to give "Orion" a careful and methodical analysis—thus to bring clearly forth its multitudinous beauties to the eye of the American public. Our limits have constrained us to treat it in an imperfect and cursory manner. We have had to content ourselves chiefly with assertion, where our original purpose was to demonstrate. We have left unsaid a hundred things which a well-grounded enthusiasm would have prompted us to say. One thing, however, we must and will say, in conclusion. "Orion" will be admitted, by every man of genius, to be one of the noblest, if not the very noblest poetical work of the age. Its defects are trivial and conventional—its beauties intrinsic and *supreme*.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY.*

MACAULAY has obtained a reputation which, although deservedly great, is yet in a remarkable measure undeserved. The few who regard him merely as a terse, forcible, and logical writer, full of thought, and abounding in original views, often sagacious and never otherwise than admirably expressed, appear to us precisely in the right. The many who look upon him as not only all this, but as a comprehensive and profound thinker, little prone to error, err essentially themselves. The source of the general mistake lies in a very singular consideration,—yet in one upon which we do not remember ever to have heard a word of comment. We allude to a tendency in the public mind toward logic for logic's sake—a liability to confound the vehicle with the conveyed—an aptitude to be so dazzled by the luminousness with which an idea is set forth, as to mistake it for the luminousness of the idea itself. The error is one exactly analogous with that which leads the immature poet to

* "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays." By T. Babington Macaulay. Carey & Hart, Philadelphia.

think himself sublime wherever he is obscure, because obscurity is a source of the sublime—thus confounding obscurity of expression with the expression of obscurity. In the case of Macaulay—and we may say, *en passant*, of our own Channing—we assent to what he says, too often because we so very clearly understand what it is that he intends to say. Comprehending vividly the points and the sequence of his argument, we fancy that we are concurring in the argument itself. It is not every mind which is at once able to analyze the satisfaction it receives from such essays as we see here. If it were merely *beauty* of style for which they were distinguished—if they were remarkable only for rhetorical flourishes—we would not be apt to estimate these flourishes at more than their due value. We would not agree with the doctrines of the essayist on account of the elegance with which they were urged. On the contrary, we would be inclined to disbelief. But when all ornament, save that of simplicity, is disclaimed—when we are attacked by precision of language, by perfect accuracy of expression, by directness and singleness of thought, and above all by a logic the most rigorously close and consequential—it is hardly a matter for wonder that nine of us out of ten are content to rest in the gratification thus received as in the gratification of absolute truth.

Of the terseness and simple vigor of Macaulay's style it is unnecessary to point out instances. Every one will acknowledge his merits on this score. His exceeding

closeness of logic, however, is more especially remarkable. With this he suffers nothing to interfere. Here, for example, is a sentence in which, to preserve entire the chain of his argument—*to leave no minute gap which the reader might have to fill up with thought*—he runs into most unusual tautology.

"The books and traditions of a sect may contain, mingled with propositions strictly theological, other propositions, purporting to rest on the same authority, which relate to physics. If new discoveries should throw discredit on the physical propositions, the theological propositions, unless they can be separated from the physical propositions, will share in their discredit."

These things are very well in their way; but it is indeed questionable whether they do not appertain rather to the trickery of thought's vehicle than to thought itself—rather to reason's shadow than to reason. Truth, for truth's sake, is seldom so enforced. It is scarcely too much to say that the style of the profound thinker is never closely logical. Here we might instance George Combe—than whom a more candid reasoner never, perhaps, wrote or spoke—than whom more a complete antipode to Babington Macaulay there certainly never existed. The former *reasons* to discover the true. The latter *argues* to convince the world, and, in arguing, not unfrequently surprises himself into conviction. What Combe appears to Macaulay it would be a difficult thing to say. What Macaulay is thought of by Combe we can understand

very well. The man who looks at an argument in its details alone, will not fail to be misled by the one; while he who keeps steadily in view the *generality* of a thesis will always at least approximate the truth under guidance of the other.

Macaulay's tendency—and the tendency of mere logic in general—to concentrate force upon minutiæ, at the expense of a subject as a whole, is well instanced in an article (in the volume now before us,) on Ranke's "History of the Popes." This article is called a review—possibly because it is any thing else—as *lucus* is *lucus a non lucendo*. In fact it is nothing more than a beautifully written treatise on the main theme of Ranke himself; the whole matter of the treatise being deduced from the History. In the way of criticism there is nothing worth the name. The strength of the essayist is put forth to account for the progress of Romanism by maintaining that divinity is not a progressive science. The enigmas, says he, in substance, which perplex the natural theologian are the same in all ages, while the Bible, where alone we are to seek revealed truth, has always been what it is.

The manner in which these two propositions are set forth is a model for the logician and for the student of *belles lettres*—yet the error into which the essayist has rushed headlong is egregious. He attempts to deceive his readers, or has deceived himself, by confounding the nature of that proof from which we reason of the concerns of earth, considered as man's habitation, and the

nature of that evidence from which we reason of the same earth regarded as a unit of that vast whole, the universe. In the former case the *data* being palpable, the proof is direct; in the latter it is purely *analogical.* Were the indications we derive from science of the nature and designs of Deity, and thence, by inference, of man's destiny—were these indications proof direct, no advance in science would strengthen them; for, as our author truly observes, "nothing could be added to the force of the argument which the mind finds in every beast, bird, or flower"; but as these indications are rigidly analogical, every step in human knowledge—every astronomical discovery, for instance—throws additional light upon the august subject, *by extending the range of analogy.* That we know no more to-day of the nature of Diety—of its purposes—and thus of man himself—than we did even a dozen years ago, is a proposition disgracefully absurd; and of this any astronomer could assure Mr. Macaulay. Indeed, to our own mind, the *only* irrefutable argument in support of the soul's immortality—or, rather, the only conclusive proof of man's alternate dissolution and rejuvenescence *ad infinitum*—is to be found in analogies deduced from the modern established theory of the nebular cosmogony.* Mr. Macaulay, in short, has forgotten that he frequently forgets, or neglects, the very gist of his

* This cosmogony *demonstrates* that all existing bodies in the universe are formed of a nebular matter, a rare ethereal medium, pervading space, shows the mode and laws of formation, and *proves* that all things are in a perpetual state of progress, that nothing in nature is *perfected.*

subject. He has forgotten that analogical evidence cannot, at all time, be discoursed of as if identical with proof direct. Throughout the whole of his treatise he has made no distinction whatever.

CHARLES LEVER.*

THE first point to be observed in the consideration of "Charles O'Malley" is the great *popularity* of the work. We believe that in this respect it has surpassed even the inimitable compositions of Mr. Dickens. At all events it has met with a most extensive sale; and, although the graver journals have avoided its discussion, the ephemeral press has been nearly if not quite unanimous in its praise. To be sure, the commendation, although unqualified, cannot be said to have abounded in specification, or to have been, in any regard, of a satisfactory character to one seeking precise ideas on the topic of the book's particular merit. It appears to us, in fact, that the cabalistical words "fun," "rollicking," and "devil-may-care," if indeed words they be, have been made to stand in good stead of all critical comment in the case of the work under review. We first saw these dexterous expressions in a fly-leaf of "Opinions of the Press" appended to the renowned

* "Charles O'Malley, the Irish Dragoon." By Harry Lorrequer. With forty illustrations by Phiz. Complete in one volume. Carey & Hart, Philadelphia.

"Harry Lorrequer" by his publisher in Dublin. Thence transmitted, with complete echo, from critic to critic, through daily, weekly, and monthly journals without number, they have come at length to form a pendant and a portion of our author's celebrity—have come to be regarded as sufficient response to the few ignoramuses, who, obstinate as ignorant, and fool-hardy as obstinate, venture to propound a question or two about the true claims of "Harry Lorrequer," or the justice of the pretensions of "Charles O'Malley."

We shall not insult our readers by supposing any one of them unaware of the fact, that a book may be even exceedingly *popular* without *any* legitimate literary merit. This fact can be proven by numerous examples which, now and here, it will be unnecessary and perhaps indecorous to mention. The dogma, then, is absurdly false, that the popularity of a work is *primâ facie* evidence of its excellence in some respects; that is to say, the dogma is false if we confine the meaning of excellence (as here of course it must be confined) to excellence in a literary sense. The truth is, that the popularity of a book is *primâ facie* evidence of just the converse of the proposition; it is evidence of the book's *demerit*, inasmuch as it shows a "stooping to conquer,"—inasmuch as it shows that the author has dealt largely, if not altogether, in matters which are susceptible of appreciation by the mass of mankind—by uneducated thought—by uncultivated taste, by unrefined and unguided passion.

So long as the world retains its present point of civilization, so long will it be almost an axiom that no extensively *popular* book, in the right application of the term, can be a work of high merit, *as regards those particulars of the work which are popular*. A book may be readily sold, may be universally read, for the sake of some half or two thirds of its matter, which half or two thirds may be susceptible of popular appreciation, while the one half or one third remaining may be the delight of the highest intellect and genius, and absolute *caviare* to the rabble. And just as—

Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci,

so will the writer of fiction, who looks most sagaciously to his own *interest*, combine all votes by intermingling with his loftier efforts such amount of less ethereal matter as will give general currency to his composition. And here we shall be pardoned for quoting some observations of the English artist, H. Howard. Speaking of the *imitation*, he says:

The pleasure that results from it, even when employed upon the most ordinary materials, will always render that property of our art the most attractive with the majority, because it may be enjoyed with the least mental exertion. *All* men are in some degree judges of it. The cobbler in his own line may criticize Apelles; and popular opinions are never to be wholly disregarded concerning that which is addressed to the public—who, to a certain extent, are generally right; although, as the language of the refined can never be intelligible to the unedu-

cated, so the higher styles of art can never be acceptable to the multitude. In proportion as a work rises in the scale of intellect, it must necessarily become limited in the number of its admirers. For this reason the judicious artist, even in his loftiest efforts, will endeavor to introduce some of those qualities which are interesting to all, as a passport for those of a more intellectual character.

And these remarks upon painting—remarks which are mere truisms in themselves—embody nearly the whole *rationale* of the topic now under discussion. It may be added, however, that the *skill* with which the author addresses the lower taste of the populace is often a source of pleasure, because of admiration, to a taste higher and more refined, and may be made a point of comment and of commendation by the critic.

In our review of "Barnaby Rudge," we were prevented, through want of space, from showing how Mr. Dickens had so well succeeded in uniting all suffrages. What we have just said, however, will suffice upon this point. While he has appealed, in innumerable regards, to the most exalted intellect, he has meanwhile invariably touched a certain string whose vibrations are omni-prevalent. We allude to his powers of *imitation*,—that species of imitation to which Mr. Howard has reference—the *faithful* depicting of what is called still-life, and particularly of *character* in humble condition. It is his close observation and imitation of nature here which have rendered him popular, while his higher qualities, with the ingenuity evinced in

addressing the general taste, have secured him the good word of the informed and intellectual.

But this is an important point upon which we desire to be distinctly understood. We wish here to record our positive dissent (be that dissent worth what it may) from a very usual opinion—the opinion that Mr. Dickens has done justice to his own genius—that any man ever failed to do grievous wrong to his own genius—in appealing to the public *at all.* As a matter of pecuniary policy alone, is any such appeal defensible. But we speak, of course, in relation to fame—in regard to that

> ——— spur which the true spirit doth raise
> To scorn delight and live laborious days.

That a perfume should be found by any "true spirit" in the incense of mere popular applause, is, to our own apprehension at least a thing inconceivable, inappreciable,—a paradox which gives the lie unto itself—a mystery more profound than the well of Democritus. Mr. Dickens has no more business with the rabble than a seraph with a *chapeau de bras.* What 's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba? What is he to Jacques Bonhomme * or Jacques Bonhomme to him? The higher genius is a rare gift and divine. *Ἀπολλων ου παντι φαινεται: ὁς μιν ιδη, μεγας οὑτος*—not to all men Apollo shows himself; *he* is *alone great* who beholds him.† And his greatness has its office God-assigned. But that office is not a low commun-

* Nickname for the populace in the Middle Ages.

† Callimachus—*Hymn to Apollo.*

ion with low, or even with ordinary, intellect. The holy —the electric spark of genius is the medium of intercourse between the noble and more noble mind. For lesser purposes there are humbler agents. There are puppets enough, able enough, willing enough, to perform in literature the little things to which we have had reference. For one Fouqué there are fifty Molières. For one Angelo there are five hundred Jan Steens. For one Dickens there are five million Smolletts, Fieldings, Marryats, Arthurs, Cocktons, Bogtons, and Frogtons.

It is, in brief, the duty of all whom circumstances have led into criticism—it is, at least, a duty from which *we* individually shall never shrink—to uphold the true dignity of genius, to combat its degradation, to plead for the exercise of its powers in those bright fields which are its legitimate and peculiar province, and which for it alone lie gloriously outspread.

But to return to "Charles O'Malley" and its popularity. We have endeavored to show that this latter must not be considered in any degree as the measure of its merit, but should rather be understood as indicating a deficiency in this respect, when we bear in mind, as we should do, the highest aims of intellect in fiction. A slight examination of the work (for in truth it is worth no more) will sustain us in what we have said. The plot is exceedingly meagre. Charles O'Malley, the hero, is a young orphan Irishman, living in Galway County, Ireland, in the house of his uncle Godfrey, to whose sadly encumbered estates the youth is

heir apparent and presumptive. He becomes enamoured, while on a visit to a neighbor, of Miss Lucy Dashwood, and finds a rival in a Captain Hammersley. Some words carelessly spoken by Lucy inspire him with a desire for military renown. After sojourning, therefore, for a brief period at Dublin University, he obtains a commission and proceeds to the peninsula with the British army under Wellington. Here he distinguishes himself, is promoted, and meets frequently with Miss Dashwood, whom obstinately, and in spite of the lady's own acknowledgment of love for himself, he supposes in love with Hammersley. Upon the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo he returns home; finds his uncle, of course, *just* dead; and sells his commission to disencumber the estate. Presently Napoleon escapes from Elba, and our hero, obtaining a staff appointment under Picton, returns to the peninsula, is present at Waterloo (where Hammersley is killed), saves the life of Lucy's father for the second time, as he has already twice saved that of Lucy herself; is rewarded by the hand of the latter; and making his way back to O'Malley Castle, "lives happily all the rest of his days."

In and about this plot (if such it may be called) there are more absurdities than we have patience to enumerate. The author, or narrator, for example, is supposed to be Harry Lorrequer as far as the end of the preface, which, by the way, is one of the best portions of the book. O'Malley then tells his own story. But the publishing office of the *Dublin University Magazine* (in which the narrative

originally appeared) having been burned down, there ensues a sad confusion of identity between O'Malley and Lorrequer, so that it is difficult, for the nonce, to say which is which. In the want of copy consequent upon the disaster, James, the novelist, comes in to the relief of Lorrequer, or perhaps of O'Malley, with one of the flattest and most irrelevant of love-tales. Meantime, in the story proper are repetitions without end. We have already said that the hero *saves the life of his mistress twice, and of her father twice.* But not content with this, he has *two* mistresses, *and saves the life of both at different periods, in precisely the same manner*—that is to say, by causing his horse, in each instance, to perform a Munchausen side-leap, at the moment when a spring forward would have impelled him upon his beloved. And then we have one unending, undeviating succession of junketings, in which "devilled kidneys" are never by any accident found wanting. The unction and pertinacity with which the author discusses what he chooses to denominate "devilled kidneys" are indeed edifying, to say no more. The truth is, that drinking, telling anecdotes, and devouring "devilled kidneys" may be considered as the sum total, as the *thesis* of the book. Never in the whole course of his eventful life, does Mr. O'Malley get "two or three assembled together" without seducing them forthwith to a table, and placing before them a dozen of wine and a dish of "devilled kidneys." This accomplished, the parties begin what seems to be the business of the author's existence—

the narration of unusually *broad tales*—like those of the Southdown mutton. And here, in fact, we have the *plan* of that whole work of which the *United Service Gazette* has been pleased to vow it "would rather be the author than of all the 'Pickwicks' and 'Nicklebys' in the world,"—a sentiment which we really blush to say has been echoed by many respectable members of our own press. The general plot or narrative is a mere thread upon which after-dinner anecdotes, some good, some bad, some utterly worthless, and *not one truly original*, are strung with about as much method, and about half as much dexterity, as we see ragged urchins employ in stringing the kernels of nuts.

It would, indeed, be difficult to convey to one who has not examined this production for himself, any idea of the exceedingly rough, clumsy, and inartistical manner in which even this bald conception is carried out. The stories are absolutely dragged in by the ears. So far from finding them result naturally or plausibly from the conversation of the interlocutors, even the blindest reader may perceive the author's struggling and blundering effort to introduce them. It is rendered quite evident that they were originally "on hand," and that "O'Malley" has been concocted for their introduction. Among other *niaïseries* we observe the silly trick of whetting appetite by delay. The conversation over the "kidneys" is brought, for example, to such a pass that one of the speakers is called upon for a story, which he forthwith declines for any rea-

son, or for none. At a subsequent "broil" he is again pressed, and again refuses, and it is not until the reader's patience is fairly exhausted, and he has consigned both the story and its author to Hades, that the gentleman in question is prevailed upon to discourse. The only conceivable result of this *fanfarronade* is the ruin of the tale when told, through exaggerating anticipation respecting it.

The anecdotes thus narrated being the staple of the book, and the awkward manner of their interlocution having been pointed out, it but remains to be seen what the anecdotes are, in themselves, and what is the merit of their narration. And here, let it not be supposed that we have any design to deprive the Devil of his due. There are several very excellent anecdotes in "Charles O'Malley" very cleverly and pungently told. Many of the scenes in which Monsoon figures are rich—less, however, from the scenes themselves than from the piquant, but by no means original, character of Monsoon—a drunken, maudlin, dishonest old Major, given to communicativeness and mock morality over his cups, and not over-careful in detailing adventures which tell against himself. One or two of the college pictures are unquestionably good—but might have been better. In general, the reader is made to feel that fine subjects have fallen into unskilful hands. By way of instancing this assertion, and at the same time of conveying an idea of the tone and character of the stories, we will quote one of the shortest, and assuredly one of the best.

"Ah, by-the-by, how 's the Major?"

"Charmingly; only a little bit in a scrape just now. Sir Arthur—Lord Wellington, I mean—had him up for his fellows being caught pillaging, and gave him a devil of a rowing a few days ago.

"'Very disorderly corps yours, Major O'Shaughnessy,' said the general; 'more men up for punishment than any regiment in the service.'

"Shaugh muttered something, but his voice was lost in a loud cock-a-doo-do-doo, that some bold chanticleer set up at the moment.

"'If the officers do their duty, Major O'Shaughnessy, these acts of insubordination do not occur.'

"'Cock-a-doo-do-doo,' was the reply. Some of the staff found it hard not to laugh; but the General went on—

"'If, therefore, the practice does not cease, I 'll draft the men into West India regiments.'

"'Cock-a-doo-do-doo!'

"'And if any articles pillaged from the inhabitants are detected in the quarters, or about the persons, of the troops—'

"'Cock-a-doo-do-*doo!*' screamed louder here than ever.

"'Damn that cock—where is it?'

"There was a general look around on all sides, which seemed in vain; when a tremendous repetition of the cry resounded from O'Shaughnessy's coat-pocket,—thus detecting the valiant Major himself in the very practice of his corps. There was no standing this; every one burst out into a peal of laughter; and Lord Wellington himself could not resist, but turned away muttering to himself as he went: 'Damned rob-

bers every man of them,' while a final war-note from the Major's pocket closed the interview."

Now this is an anecdote at which every one will laugh; but its effect might have been vastly heightened by putting a few words of grave morality and reprobation of the conduct of his troops into the mouth of O'Shaughnessy, upon whose character they would have told well. The cock, in interrupting the thread of his discourse, would thus have afforded an excellent context. We have scarcely a reader, moreover, who will fail to perceive the want of *tact* shown in dwelling upon the *mirth* which the anecdote occasioned. The error here is precisely like that of a man's laughing at his own spoken jokes. Our author is uniformly guilty of this mistake. He has an absurd fashion, also, of informing the reader, at the conclusion of each of his anecdotes, that, however good the anecdote might be, he (the reader) cannot enjoy it to the full extent in default of the *manner* in which it was orally narrated. He has no business to say any thing of the kind. It is his duty to convey the manner not less than the matter of his narratives.

But we may say of these latter that, in general, they have the air of being *remembered* rather than invented. No man who has seen much of the rough life of the camp will fail to recognize among them many very old acquaintances. Some of them are as ancient as the hills, and have been, time out of mind, the common property of the bivouac. They have been narrated orally all the world

over. The chief merit of the writer is, that he has been the first to collect and to print them. It is observable, in fact, that the second volume of the work is very far inferior to the first. The author seems to have exhausted his whole hoarded store in the beginning. His conclusion is barren indeed, and but for the historical details (for which he has no claim to merit) would be especially prosy and dull. *Now the true invention never exhausts itself.* It is mere cant and ignorance to talk of the possibility of the really imaginative man's "writing himself out." His soul but derives nourishment from the streams that flow therefrom. As well prate about the aridity of the eternal ocean ἐξ ουπερ παντες ποταμοι. So long as the universe of thought shall furnish matter for novel combination, so long will the spirit of true genius be original, be exhaustless—be itself.

A few cursory observations. The book is filled to overflowing with songs of very doubtful excellence, the most of which are put into the mouth of Mickey Free, an amusing Irish servant of O'Malley's, and are given as his impromptu effusions. The subject of the improvisos is always the matter in hand at the moment of composition. The author evidently prides himself upon his poetical powers, about which the less we say the better; but if any thing were wanting to assure us of his absurd ignorance and inappreciation of art, we should find the fullest assurance in the mode in which these doggerel verses are introduced.

The occasional sentiment with which the volumes are interspersed, there is an absolute necessity for skipping.

Can anybody tell us what is meant by the affectation of the word *L'envoy* which is made the heading of two prefaces?

That portion of the account of the battle of Waterloo which gives O'Malley's experiences while a prisoner, and in close juxtaposition to Napoleon, bears evident traces of having been translated, and very literally too, from a French manuscript.

The English of the work is sometimes even amusing. We have continually, for example, *eat*, the present, for *ate*, perfect—page 17. At page 16 we have this delightful sentence: "Captain Hammersley, however, *never* took further notice of me, but continued to recount, for the amusement of those *about*, several excellent stories of his military career, which I confess were heard with every *test* of delight by all save me." At page 357 we have some sage talk about "the entire of the army"; and at page 368 the accomplished O'Malley speaks of "*drawing* a last look upon his sweetheart." These things arrest our attention as we open the book at random. It abounds in them, and in vulgarisms even much worse than they.

But why speak of vulgarisms of language? There is a disgusting vulgarism of thought which pervades and contaminates this whole production, and from which a delicate or lofty mind will shrink as from a pestilence. Not the least repulsive manifestation of this leprosy is to

be found in the author's blind and grovelling worship of mere rank. Of the Prince Regent, that filthy compound of all that is bestial, that lazar-house of all moral corruption, he scruples not to speak in terms of the grossest adulation, sneering at Edmund Burke in the same villainous breath in which he extols the talents, the graces, and the *virtues* of George the Fourth! That any man, to-day, can be found so degraded in heart as to style this reprobate, "one who, in every feeling of his nature, and in every feature of his deportment, was every inch a prince," is matter for grave reflection and sorrowful debate. The American, at least, who shall peruse the concluding pages of the book now under review, and not turn in disgust from the base sycophancy which infects them, is unworthy of his country and his name. But the truth is, that a gross and contracted soul renders itself unquestionably manifest in almost every line of the composition.

And this—*this* is the *work*, in respect to which its author, aping the airs of intellect, prates about his "haggard cheek," his "sunken eye," his "aching and tired head," his "nights of toil," and (good heavens!) his "days of thought." That the thing is popular we grant—while that we cannot deny the fact, we grieve. But the career of true taste is onward—and now moves more vigorously onward than ever—and the period, perhaps, is not hopelessly distant, when in decrying the mere balderdash of such matters as "Charles O'Malley," we shall do less violence to the feelings and judgment even of the populace, than, we much fear, has been done in this article.

FREDERICK MARRYAT.

IT has been well said that "the success of certain works may be traced to sympathy between the author's mediocrity of ideas, and mediocrity of ideas on the part of the public." In commenting on this passage, Mrs. Gore, herself a shrewd philosopher, observes that, whether as regards men or books, there exists an excellence too excellent for general favor. To "make a hit"—to captivate the public eye, ear, or understanding—without a certain degree of merit, is impossible; but the "hardest hit" is seldom made, indeed we may say *never* made, by the highest merit. When we wrote the word *seldom* we were thinking of Dickens and "The Curiosity Shop," a work unquestionably of "the highest merit," and which at a first glance appears to have made the most unequivocal of "hits,"—but we suddenly remembered that the compositions called "Harry Lorrequer" and "Charles O'Malley" had borne the palm from "The Curiosity Shop" in point of what is properly termed *popularity*.

There can be no question, we think, that the philosophy of all this *is* to be found in the apothegm with which we

began. Marryat is a singular instance of its truth. He has always been a very *popular* writer in the most rigorous sense of the word. His books are essentially "mediocre." His ideas are the common property of the mob, and have been their common property time out of mind. We look throughout his writings in vain for the slightest indication of originality—for the faintest incentive to thought. His plots, his language, his opinions are neither adapted nor intended for scrutiny. We must be contented with them as sentiments, rather than as ideas; and properly to estimate them, even in this view, we must bring ourselves into a sort of identification with the sentiment of the mass. Works composed in this spirit are sometimes purposely so composed by men of superior intelligence, and here we call to mind the *Chansons* of Béranger. But usually they are the natural exponent of the vulgar thought in the person of a vulgar thinker. In either case they claim for themselves *that* which, for want of a more definite expression, has been called by critics *nationality*. Whether this nationality in letters is a fit object for high-minded ambition, we cannot here pause to inquire. If it is, then Captain Marryat occupies a more desirable position than, in our heart, we are willing to award him.

"Joseph Rushbrook"* is not a book with which the

* "Joseph Bushbrook; or, The Poacher." By Captain Marryat, author of "Peter Simple," "Jacob Faithful," etc., etc. Two volumes. Philadelphia: Carey & Hart.

critic should occupy many paragraphs. It is not very dissimilar to "Poor Jack," which latter is, perhaps, the best specimen of its author's cast of thought, and *national* manner, although inferior in interest to "Peter Simple."

The plot can only please those who swallow the probabilities of "Sindbad the Sailor," or "Jack and the Bean-Stalk,"—or we should have said, more strictly, the incidents; for plot, properly speaking, there is none at all.

Joseph Rushbrook is an English soldier who, having long served his country and received a wound in the head, is pensioned and discharged. He becomes a poacher, and educates his son (the hero of the tale, and also named Joseph) to the same profession. A pedlar, named Byres, is about to betray the father, who avenges himself by shooting him. The son takes the burden of the crime upon himself, and flees the country. A reward is offered for his apprehension—a reward which one Furness, a school-master, is very anxious to obtain. This Furness dogs the footsteps of our hero, much as Fagin, the Jew, dogs those of Oliver Twist, forcing him to quit place after place, just as he begins to get comfortably settled. In thus roaming about, little Joseph meets with all kinds of outrageously improbable adventures; and not only this, but the reader is bored to death with the outrageously improbable adventures of every one with whom little Joseph comes in contact. Good fortune absolutely besets him. Money falls at his feet wherever he goes, and he has only to stoop and pick it up. At length he arrives

at the height of prosperity, and thinks he is entirely rid of Furness, when Furness re-appears. That Joseph should, in the end, be brought to trial for the pedlar's murder is so clearly the author's design, that he who runs may read it, and we naturally suppose that his persecutor, Furness, is to be the instrument of this evil. We suppose also, of course, that in bringing this misfortune upon our hero, the school-master will involve himself in ruin, in accordance with the common ideas of poetical justice. But no;—Furness, being found in the way, is killed off, accidentally, having lived and plotted, to no ostensible purpose, through the better half of the book. Circumstances that have nothing to do with the story involve Joseph in his trial. He refuses to divulge the real secret of the murder, and is sentenced to transportation. The elder Rushbrook, in the meantime, has avoided suspicion and fallen heir to a great property. Just as his son is about to be sent across the water, some of Joe's friends discover the true state of affairs, and obtain from the father, who is now conveniently upon his death-bed, a confession of his guilt. Thus all ends well—if the word *well* can be applied in any sense to trash so ineffable; the father dies, the son is released, inherits the estate, marries his lady-love, and prospers in every possible and impossible way.

We have mentioned the imitation of Fagin. A second plagiarism is feebly attempted in the character of one Nancy, a trull, who is based upon the Nancy of Oliver Twist—for Marryat is not often at the trouble of diversi-

fying his thefts. This Nancy changes her name three or four times, and so in fact do each and all of the *dramatis personæ*. This changing of name is one of the bright ideas with which the author of "Peter Simple" is most pertinaciously afflicted. We would not be bound to say how many aliases are borne by the hero in this instance—some dozen perhaps.

The novels of Marryat—his later ones at least—are evidently written to order, for certain considerations, and have to be delivered within certain periods. He thus finds it his interest to *push on*. Now, for this mode of progress, *incident* is the sole thing which answers. One incident begets another, and so on *ad infinitum*. There is never the slightest necessity for pausing, especially where no plot is to be cared for. *Comment*, in the author's own person, upon what is transacting, is left entirely out of question. There is thus none of that *binding* power perceptible, which often gives a species of unity (the unity of the writer's individual thought) to the most random narrations. All works composed as we have stated Marryat's to be composed, will be run on, *incidentally*, in the manner described; and, notwithstanding that it would seem at first sight to be otherwise, yet it is true that no works are so insufferably tedious. These are the novels which we read with a hurry exactly consonant and proportionate with that in which they were indited. We seldom leave them unfinished, yet we labor through to the end, and reach it with unalloyed pleasure.

The *commenting* force can never be safely disregarded. It is far better to have a dearth of incident, with skilful observations upon it, than the utmost variety of event, without. In some previous review we have observed (and our observation is borne out by analysis) that it was the deep sense of the want of this binding and commenting power in the old Greek drama which gave rise to the chorus. The chorus came at length to supply, in some measure, a deficiency which is inseparable from dramatic action, and represented the expression of *the public* interest or sympathy in the matters transacted. The successful novelist must, in the same manner, be careful to bring into view his *private* interest, sympathy, and opinion, in regard to his own creations.

We have spoken of "The Poacher" at greater length than we intended; for it deserves little more than an announcement. It has the merit of a homely and not unnatural simplicity of style, and is not destitute of pathos; but this is all. Its English is excessively slovenly. Its events are monstrously improbable. There is no adaptation of parts about it. The truth is, it is a pitiable production. There are twenty young men of our acquaintance who make no pretension to literary ability, yet who could produce a better book *in a week*.

HENRY COCKTON.*

"CHARLES O'MALLEY," "Harry Lorrequer," "Valentine Vox," "Stanley Thorn," and some other effusions, are novels depending for effect upon what gave popularity to "Peregrine Pickle,"—we mean *practical joke*. To men whose animal spirits are high, whatever may be their mental ability, such works are always acceptable. To the uneducated, to those who read little, to the obtuse in intellect (and these three classes constitute the mass) these books are not only acceptable, but are the only ones which can be called so. We here make two divisions: that of the men who *can* think, but who dislike thinking; and that of the men who either have not been presented with the materials for thought, or who have no brains with which to "work up" the material. With these classes of people "Stanley Thorn" is a favorite. It not only demands no reflection, but repels it, or dissipates

* "Stanley Thorn." By Henry Cockton, Esq., author of "Valentine Vox, the Ventriloquist," etc., with numerous illustrations, designed by Cruikshank, Leech, etc., and engraved by Yeager. Lee & Blanchard, Philadelphia.

it—much as a silver rattle the wrath of a child. It is not in the least degree *suggestive*. Its readers arise from its perusal with the identical idea in possession at sitting down. Yet, *during* perusal, there has been a tingling physico-mental exhilaration, somewhat like that induced by a cold bath, or a flesh-brush, or a gallop on horseback —a very delightful and very healthful matter in its way. But these things are not *letters*. "Valentine Vox," and "Charles O'Malley" are no more "*literature*" than cat-gut is music. The visible and tangible tricks of a baboon belong not less to the *belles-lettres* than does "Harry Lorrequer." When this gentleman adorns his countenance with lamp-black, knocks over an apple woman, or brings about a rent in his pantaloons, we laugh at him when bound up in a volume, just as we would laugh at his adventures if happening before our eyes in the street. But mere incidents whether serious or comic, whether occurring or described,—*mere incidents* are not books. Neither are they the basis of books—of which the idiosyncrasy is *thought* in contradistinction from *deed*. A book without action cannot be; but a book is only such, to the extent of its thought, independently of its deed. Thus of Algebra; which is, or should be, defined as "a mode of computing with symbols by means of signs." With numbers, as Algebra, it has nothing to do; and although no algebraic computation can proceed without numbers, yet Algebra is only such to the extent of its analysis independently of its Arithmetic.

We do not mean to *find fault* with the class of performances of which "Stanley Thorn" is one. Whatever tends to the amusement of man tends to his benefit. Aristotle, with singular assurance, has declared poetry the most philosophical of all writings, (*spoudiotaton kai philosophikotaton genos*) defending it principally upon that score. He seems to think—and many following him have thought—that the end of all literature should be instruction—a favorite dogma of the school of Wordsworth. But it is a truism that the end of our existence is happiness. If so, the end of every separate aim of our existence —of every thing connected with our existence—should be still—happiness. Therefore, the end of instruction should be happiness—and happiness, what is it but the extent or duration of pleasure?—therefore, the end of instruction should be pleasure. But the cant of the Lakists would establish the exact converse, and make the end of all pleasure instruction. In fact, *ceteris paribus*, he who pleases is of more importance to his fellow-man than he who instructs, since the *dulce* is alone the *utile*, and pleasure is the end already attained, which instruction is merely the means of attaining. It will be said that Wordsworth, with Aristotle, has reference to instruction with eternity in view; but either such cannot be the tendency of his argument, or he is laboring at a sad disadvantage; for his works—or at least those of his school—are professedly to be understood by the few, and it is the many who stand in need of salvation. Thus the moralist's parade of meas-

ures would be as completely thrown away as are those of the Devil in "Melmoth," who plots and counterplots through three octavo volumes for the entrapment of one or two souls, while any common devil would have demolished one or two thousand.

When, therefore, we assert that these practical-joke publications are not "literature," because not "thoughtful" in any degree, we must not be understood as objecting to the thing in itself, but to its claims upon our attention as critic. Dr. —— what is his name?—strings together a number of facts or fancies which, when printed, answer the laudable purpose of amusing a very large, if not a very respectable, number of people. To this proceeding upon the part of the Doctor—or on the part of his imitator, Mr. Jeremy Stockton, the author of "Valentine Vox," we *can* have no objection whatever. His *books* do not please *us*. We will not read them. Still less shall we speak of them seriously as *books*. Being in no respect works of art, they neither deserve, nor are amenable to, criticism.

"Stanley Thorn" may be described in brief, as a collection, rather than as a series, of practical haps and mishaps, befalling a young man very badly brought up by his mother. He flogs his father with a codfish, and does other similar things. We have no fault to find with him whatever, except that, in the end, he *does not* come to the gallows.

We have no great fault to find with *him*, but with Mr.

Bockton, his father, much. He is a consummate plagiarist; and, in our opinion, nothing more despicable exists. There is not a *good* incident in his book (?) of which we cannot point out the paternity with at least a sufficient precision. The opening adventures are all *in the style* of "Cyril Thornton." Bob, following Amelia in disguise, is borrowed from one of the Smollett or Fielding novels—there are many of our readers who will be able to say *which*. The cab driven over the Crescent *trottoir*, is from "Pierce Egan." The swindling tricks of Colonel Somebody, at the commencement of the novel, and of Captain Filcher afterward, are from "Pickwick Abroad." The doings at Madame Pompour's (or some such name), with the description of Isabelle, are from "Ecarté; or, The Salons of Paris,"—a *rich* book. The Sons-of-Glory scene (or its *wraith*) we have seen—*somewhere;* while (not to be tedious) the whole account of Stanley's election, from his first conception of the design, through the entire canvass, —the purchasing of the "Independents," the row at the hustings, the chairing, the feast, and the petition,—is so obviously *stolen* from "Ten Thousand a Year," as to be disgusting. Bob and the "old venerable"—what are they but feeble reflections of young and old Weller? The *tone* of the narration throughout is an absurd *echo* of Boz. For example: "'We've come agin about them there little accounts of ourn—question is do you mean to settle 'em or don't you?' His colleagues, by whom he was backed, highly approved of this question, and winked

and nodded with the view of intimating to each other that in their judgment that was the point." Who so dull as to give Mr. Bogton any more credit for these things than we give the buffoon for the *rôle* which he has committed to memory?

CHARLES DICKENS.*

WE often hear it said of this or of that proposition, that it may be good in theory, but will not answer in practice; and in such assertions we find the substance of all the sneers at critical art which so gracefully curl the upper lips of a tribe which is beneath it. We mean the small geniuses — the literary Titmice — animalculæ which judge of merit solely by *result*, and boast of the solidity, tangibility, and infallibility of the test which they employ. The worth of a work is most accurately estimated, they assure us, by the number of those who peruse it; and "does a book sell?" is a query embodying, in their opinion, all that need be said on the topic of its fitness for sale. We should as soon think of maintaining, in the presence of these creatures, the *dictum* of Anaxagoras, that snow is black, as of disputing, for example, the profundity of that genius which, in a run of five hundred nights, has rendered itself evident in "London Assur-

* "Barnaby Rudge." By Charles Dickens (Boz). Author of "The Old Curiosity Shop," "Pickwick," "Oliver Twist," etc., etc. With numerous illustrations, by Cattermale, Browne, and Sibson. Lea & Blanchard, Philadelphia.

ance." "What," cry they, "are critical precepts to us, or to any body? Were we to observe all the critical rules in creation we should still be unable to write a good book," —a point, by the way, which we shall not now pause to deny. "Give us *results*," they vociferate, "for we are plain men of common-sense. We contend for fact instead of fancy—for practice in opposition to theory."

The mistake into which the Titmice have been innocently led, however, is precisely that of dividing the practice which they would uphold, from the theory to which they would object. They should have been told in infancy, and thus prevented from exposing themselves in old age, that theory and practice are in so much *one*, that the former implies or includes the latter. A theory is only good as such, in proportion to its reducibility to practice. If the practice fail, it is because the theory is imperfect. To say what they are in the daily habit of saying—that such or such a matter may be good in theory but is false in practice—is to perpetrate a bull—to commit a paradox—to state a contradiction in terms—in plain words, to tell a lie *which is a lie at sight* to the understanding of any thing bigger than a Titmouse.

But we have no idea, just now, of persecuting the Tittlebats by too close a scrutiny into their little opinions. It is not our purpose, for example, to press them with so grave a weapon as the *argumentum ad absurdum*, or to ask them why, if the popularity of a book be in fact the measure of its worth, we should not be at once in condition

to admit the inferiority of "Newton's Principia" to "Hoyle's Games"; of "Earnest Maltravers" to "Jack-the-Giant-Killer," or "Jack Sheppard," or "Jack Brag"; and of "Dick's Christian Philosopher" to "Charlotte Temple," or the "Memoirs of de Grammont," or to one or two dozen other works which must be nameless. Our present design is but to speak, at some length, of a book which in so much concerns the Titmice, that it affords them the very kind of demonstration which they chiefly affect—*practical* demonstration of the fallacy of one of their favorite dogmas; we mean the dogma that no work of fiction can fully suit, at the same time, the critical and the popular taste; in fact, that the disregarding or contravening of critical rule is absolutely essential to success, beyond a certain and very limited extent, with the public at large. And if, in the course of our random observations—for we have no space for systematic review—it should appear, incidentally, that the vast popularity of "Barnaby Rudge" must be regarded less as the measure of its value, than as the legitimate and inevitable result of certain well-understood critical propositions reduced by genius into practice, there will appear nothing more than what has before become apparent in the "Vicar of Wakefield" of Goldsmith, or in the "Robinson Crusoe" of De Foe—nothing more, in fact, than what is a truism to all but the Titmice.

Those who know us will not, from what is here premised, suppose it our intention to enter into any whole-

sale *laudation* of "Barnaby Rudge." In truth, our design may appear, at a cursory glance, to be very different indeed. Boccalini, in his "Advertisements from Parnassus," tells us that a critic once presented Apollo with a severe censure upon an excellent poem. The god asked him for the beauties of the work. He replied that he only troubled himself about the errors. Apollo presented him with a sack of unwinnowed wheat, and bade him pick out all the chaff for his pains. Now we have not fully made up our minds that the god was in the right. We are not sure that the limit of critical duty is not very generally misapprehended. *Excellence* may be considered an axiom, or a proposition which becomes self-evident just in proportion to the clearness or precision with which it is *put*. If it fairly exists, in this sense, it requires no further elucidation. It is not excellence if it need to be demonstrated as such. To point out too particularly the beauties of a work is to admit, tacitly, that these beauties are not wholly admirable. Regarding, then, excellence as that which is capable of self-manifestation, it but remains for the critic to show when, where, and how it fails in becoming manifest; and, in this showing, it will be the fault of the book itself if what of beauty it contains be not, at least, placed in the fairest light. In a word, we may assume, notwithstanding a vast deal of pitiable cant upon this topic, that in pointing out frankly the errors of a work, we do nearly all that is critically necessary in displaying its merits. In teaching what per-

fection *is*, how, in fact, shall we more rationally proceed than in specifying what it *is not?*

The plot of "Barnaby Rudge" runs thus: About a hundred years ago, Geoffrey Haredale and John Chester were schoolmates in England—the former being the scapegoat and drudge of the latter. Leaving school, the boys become friends, with much of the old understanding. Haredale loves; Chester deprives him of his mistress. The one cherishes the most deadly hatred; the other merely contemns and avoids. By routes widely different both attain mature age. Haredale, remembering his old love, and still cherishing his old hatred, remains a bachelor and is poor. Chester, among other crimes, is guilty of the seduction and heartless abandonment of a gypsy girl, who, after the desertion of her lover, gives birth to a son, and, falling into evil courses, is finally hung at Tyburn. The son is received and taken charge of, at an inn called the Maypole, upon the borders of Epping Forest, and about twelve miles from London. This inn is kept by one John Willet, a burly-headed and very obtuse little man, who has a son, Joe, and who employs his *protégé*, under the single name of Hugh, as perpetual hostler at the inn. Hugh's father marries, in the meantime, a rich *parvenue*, who soon dies, but not before having presented Mr. Chester with a boy, Edward. The father (a thoroughly selfish man-of-the-world, whose model is Chesterfield) educates this son at a distance, seeing him rarely, and calling him to the paternal residence, at London,

only when he has attained the age of twenty-four or five. He, the father, has, long ere this time, spent the fortune brought him by his wife, having been living upon his wits and a small annuity for some eighteen years. The son is recalled chiefly that by marrying an heiress, on the strength of his own personal merit and the reputed wealth of old Chester, he may enable the latter to continue his gayeties in old age. But of this design, as well as of his poverty, Edward is kept in ignorance for some three or four years after his recall; when the father's discovery of what he considers an inexpedient love-entanglement on the part of the son, induces him to disclose the true state of his affairs, as well as the real tenor of his intentions.

Now the love-entanglement of which we speak is considered inexpedient by Mr. Chester for two reasons—the first of which is, that the lady beloved is the orphan niece of his old enemy, Haredale, and the second is, that Haredale (although in circumstances which have been much and very unexpectedly improved during the preceding twenty-two years) is still insufficiently wealthy to meet the views of Mr. Chester.

We say that, about twenty-two years before the period in question, there came an unlooked-for change in the worldly circumstances of Haredale. This gentleman has an elder brother, Reuben, who has long possessed the family inheritence of the Haredales, residing at a mansion called "The Warren," not far from the Maypole Inn, which is itself a portion of the estate. Reuben *is a*

widower, with one child, a daughter, Emma. Besides this daughter, there are living with him a gardener, a steward (whose name is Rudge) and *two* women servants, one of whom is the wife of Rudge. On the night of the nineteenth of March, 1733, Rudge murders his master for the sake of a large sum of money which he is known to have in possession. During the struggle, Mr. Haredale grasps the cord of an alarm-bell which hangs within his reach, but succeeds in sounding it only once or twice, when it is severed by the knife of the ruffian, who then, completing his bloody business, and securing the money, proceeds to quit the chamber. While doing this, however, he is disconcerted by meeting the gardener, whose pallid countenance evinces suspicion of the deed committed. The murderer is thus forced to kill his fellow-servant. Having done so, the idea strikes him of transferring the burden of the crime from himself. He dresses the corpse of the gardener in his own clothes, puts upon its finger his own ring, and in its pocket his own watch—then drags it to a pond in the grounds, and throws it in. He now returns to the house, and, disclosing all to his wife, requests her to become a partner in his flight. Horror-stricken, she falls to the ground. He attempts to raise her. She seizes his wrist, *staining her hand with blood in the attempt*. She renounces him forever; yet promises to conceal the crime. Alone, he flees the country. The next morning, Mr. Haredale being found murdered, and the steward and gardener being both missing,

both are suspected. Mrs. Rudge leaves The Warren, and retires to an obscure lodging in London (where she lives upon an annuity allowed her by Haredale) having given birth, *on the very day after the murder*, to a son, Barnaby Rudge, who proves an idiot, who bears upon his wrist a red mark, and who is born possessed with a maniacal horror of blood.

Some months since the assassination having elapsed, what appears to be the corpse of Rudge is discovered, and the outrage is attributed to the gardener. Yet not universally:—for, as Geoffrey Haredale comes into possession of the estate, there are not wanting suspicions (fomented by Chester) of his own participation in the deed. This taint of suspicion, acting upon his hereditary gloom, together with the natural grief and horror of the atrocity, embitters the whole life of Haredale. He secludes himself at The Warren, and acquires a monomaniac acerbity of temper relieved only by love of his beautiful niece.

Time wears away. Twenty-two years pass by. The niece has ripened in womanhood, and loves young Chester without the knowledge of her uncle or the youth's father. Hugh has grown a stalwart man—the type of man *the animal*, as his father is of man the ultra-civilized. Rudge, the murderer, returns, urged to his undoing by Fate. He appears at the Maypole and inquires stealthily of the circumstances which have occurred at The Warren in his absence. He proceeds to London, discovers the

dwelling of his wife, threatens her with the betrayal of her idiot son into vice, and extorts from her the bounty of Haredale. Revolting at such appropriation of such means, the widow, with Barnaby, again seeks The Warren, renounces the annuity, and, refusing to assign any reason for her conduct, states her intention of quitting London forever, and of burying herself in some obscure retreat—a retreat which she begs Haredale not to attempt discovering. When he seeks her in London the next day, she is gone; and there are no tidings, either of herself or of Barnaby; *until the expiration of five years*—which bring the time up to that of the celebrated "No Popery" Riots of Lord George Gordon.

In the meanwhile, and immediately subsequent to the reappearance of Rudge, Haredale, and the elder Chester, each heartily desirous of preventing the union of Edward and Emma, have entered into a covenant, the result of which is that, by means of treachery on the part of Chester, permitted on that of Haredale the lovers misunderstand each other and are estranged. Joe, also, the son of the inn-keeper, Willet, having been coquetted with, to too great an extent, by Dolly Varden (the pretty daughter of one Gabriel Varden, a locksmith of Clerkenwell, London), and having been otherwise maltreated at home, enlists in his Majesty's army, and is carried beyond seas, to America; not returning until toward the close of the riots. Just before their commencement, Rudge, in a midnight prowl about the scene of his atrocity, is encoun-

tered by an individual who had been familiar with him in earlier life, while living at The Warren. This individual, terrified at what he supposes, very naturally, to be the ghost of the murdered Rudge, relates his adventure to his companions at the Maypole, and John Willet conveys the intelligence, forthwith, to Mr. Haredale. Connecting the apparition, in his own mind, with the peculiar conduct of Mrs. Rudge, this gentleman imbibes a suspicion, at once, of the true state of affairs. This suspicion (which he mentions to no one) is, moreover, very strongly confirmed by an occurrence happening to Varden, the locksmith, who, visiting the woman late one night, finds her in communion of a nature apparently most confidential, with a ruffian whom the locksmith knows to be such, without knowing the man himself. Upon an attempt, on the part of Varden, to seize this ruffian, he is thwarted by Mrs. R.; and upon Haredale's inquiring minutely into the personal appearance of the man, he is found to accord with Rudge. We have already shown that the ruffian was in fact Rudge himself. Acting upon the suspicion thus aroused, Haredale watches, by night, alone, in the deserted house formerly occupied by Mrs. R., in hope of here coming upon the murderer, and makes other exertions with the view of arresting him: but all in vain.

It is, also, at the conclusion *of the five years*, that the hitherto uninvaded retreat of Mrs. Rudge is disturbed by a message from her husband, demanding money. He has discovered her abode by accident. Giving him what she

has at the time, she afterward eludes him, and hastens, with Barnaby, to bury herself in the crowd of London, until she can find opportunity again to seek retreat in some more distant region of England. But the riots have now begun. The idiot is beguiled into joining the mob, and, becoming separated from his mother (who, growing ill through grief, is borne to a hospital), meets with his old playmate Hugh, and becomes with him a ringleader in the rebellion.

The riots proceed. A conspicuous part is borne in them by one Simon Tappertit, a fantastic and conceited little apprentice of Varden's, and a sworn enemy to Joe Willet, who has rivalled him in the affection of Dolly. A hangman, Dennis, is also very busy amid the mob. Lord George Gordon, and his secretary, Gashford, with John Grueby, his servant, appear, of course, upon the scene. Old Chester, who, during the five years, has become Sir John, instigates Gashford, who has received personal insult from Haredale (a Catholic, and consequently obnoxious to the mob),—instigates Gashford to procure the burning of The Warren, and to abduct Emma during the excitement ensuing. The mansion is burned (Hugh, who also fancies himself wronged by Haredale, being chief actor in the outrage) and Miss H. carried off, in company with Dolly, who had long lived with her, and whom Tappertit abducts upon his own responsibility. Rudge, in the meantime, finding the eye of Haredale upon him (since he has become aware of the watch kept

nightly at his wife's), goaded by the dread of solitude, and fancying that his sole chance of safety lies in joining the rioters, hurries upon their track to the doomed Warren. He arrives too late—the mob have departed. Skulking about the ruins, he is discovered by Haredale, and finally captured without a struggle, within the glowing walls of the very chamber in which the deed was committed. He is conveyed to prison, where he meets and recognizes Barnaby, who had been captured as a rioter. The mob assail and burn the jail. The father and son escape. Betrayed by Dennis, both are again retaken, and Hugh shares their fate. In Newgate, Dennis, through accident, discovers the parentage of Hugh, and an effort is made in vain to interest Chester in behalf of his son. Finally, Varden procures the pardon of Barnaby; but Hugh, Rudge, and Dennis, are hung. At the eleventh hour, Joe returns from abroad with one arm. In company with Edward Chester, he performs prodigies of valor (during the last riots) on behalf of the government. The two, with Haredale and Varden, rescue Emma and Dolly. A double marriage, of course, takes place; for Dolly has repented her fine airs, and the prejudices of Haredale are overcome. Having killed Chester in a duel, he quits England forever, and ends his days in the seclusion of an Italian convent. Thus, after summary disposal of the understrappers, ends the drama of "Barnaby Rudge."

We have given, as may well be supposed, but a very

meagre outline of the story, and we have given it in the simple or natural sequence. That is to say, we have related the events, as nearly as might be, in the order of their occurrence. But this order would by no means have suited the purpose of the novelist, whose design has been to maintain the secret of the murder, and the consequent mystery which encircles Rudge, and the actions of his wife, until the catastrophe of his discovery by Haredale. The *thesis* of the novel may thus be regarded as based upon curiosity. Every point is so arranged as to perplex the reader and whet his desire for elucidation:—for example, the first appearance of Rudge at the Maypole; his questions; his persecution of Mrs. R.; the ghost seen by the frequenter of the Maypole; and Haredale's impressive conduct in consequence. What *we* have told, in the very beginning of our digest, in regard to the shifting of the gardener's dress, is sedulously kept from the reader's knowledge until he learns it from Rudge's own confession in jail. We say sedulously; for, *the intention once known*, the *traces* of the design can be found upon every page. There is an amusing and exceedingly ingenious instance at page 145, where Solomon Daisy describes his adventure with the ghost.

"It was a ghost—a spirit," cried Daisy.

"Whose?" they all three asked together.

In the excess of his emotion (for he fell back trembling in his chair and waved his hand as if entreating them to question him no further) *his answer was lost upon all* but old John Willet, who happened to be seated close beside him.

"Who!" cried Parkes and Tom Cobb—"Who was it?"

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Willet, after a long pause, "you need n't ask. The likeness of a murdered man. This is the nineteenth of March."

A profound silence ensued.

The impression here skilfully conveyed is, that the ghost seen is that of Reuben Haredale; and the mind of the not-too-accurate reader is at once averted from the true state of the case—from the murderer, Rudge, living in the body.

Now there can be no question that, by such means as these, many points which are comparatively insipid in the natural sequence of our digest, and which would have been comparatively insipid even if given in full detail in a natural sequence, are endued with the interest of mystery; but neither can it be denied that a vast many more points are at the same time deprived of all effect, and become null, through the impossibility of comprehending them without a key. The author, who, cognizant of his plot, writes with this cognizance continually operating upon him, and thus *writes to himself* in spite of himself, does not, of course, feel that much of what is effective to his own informed perception must necessarily be lost upon his uninformed readers; and he himself is never in condition, as regards his own work, to bring the matter to test. But the reader may easily satisfy himself of the validity of our objection. Let him *re-peruse* "Barnaby Rudge," and with a pre-comprehension of the mystery,

these points of which we speak break out in all directions like stars, and throw quadruple brilliance over the narrative—a brilliance which a correct taste will at once declare unprofitably sacrificed at the shrine of the keenest interest of mere mystery.

The design of *mystery*, however, being once determined upon by an author, it becomes imperative, first, that no undue or inartistical means be employed to conceal the secret of the plot; and, secondly, that the secret be well kept. Now, when, at page 16, we read that "the body of *poor Mr. Rudge, the steward, was found*" months after the outrage, etc., we see that Mr. Dickens has been guilty of no misdemeanor against Art in stating what was not the fact; since the falsehood is put into the mouth of Solomon Daisy, and given merely as the impression of this individual and of the public. The writer has not asserted it in his own person, but ingeniously conveyed an idea (false in itself, yet a belief in which is necessary for the effect of the tale) by the mouth of one of his characters. The case is different, however, when Mrs. Rudge is repeatedly denominated "the widow." It is the author who, himself, frequently so terms her. This is disingenuous and inartistical—accidentally so, of course. We speak of the matter merely by way of illustrating our point, and as an oversight on the part of Mr. Dickens.

That the secret be well kept is obviously necessary. A failure to preserve it until the proper moment of *dénouement*, throws all into confusion, so far as regards the *effect*

intended. If the mystery leak out, against the author's will, his purposes are immediately at odds and ends; for he proceeds upon the supposition that certain impressions *do* exist, which do *not* exist, in the mind of his readers. We are not prepared to say, so positively as we could wish, whether, by the public at large, the whole *mystery* of the murder committed by Rudge, with the identity of the Maypole ruffian with Rudge himself, was fathomed at any period previous to the period intended, or, if so, whether at a period so early as materially to interfere with the interest designed; but we are forced, through sheer modesty, to suppose this the case; since, by ourselves individually, the secret was distinctly understood immediately upon the perusal of the story of Solomon Daisy, which occurs at the seventh page of this volume of three hundred and twenty-three. In the number of the *Philadelphia Saturday Evening Post* for May the first, 1841, (the tale having then only begun,) will be found a *prospective notice* of some length, in which we made use of the following words:

That Barnaby is the son of the murderer may not appear evident to our readers—but we will explain. The person murdered is Mr. Reuben Haredale. He was found assassinated in his bed-chamber. His steward (Mr. Rudge, senior,) and his gardener (name not mentioned) are missing. At first both are suspected. "Some months afterward"—here we use the words of the story—"the steward's body, scarcely to be recognized but by his clothes, and the watch and ring he

wore, was found at the bottom of a piece of water in the grounds, with a deep gash in the breast, where he had been stabbed by a knife. He was only partly dressed ; and all people agreed that he had been sitting up reading in his own room, where there were many traces of blood, and was suddenly fallen upon and killed, before his master."

Now, be it observed, it is not the author himself who asserts that *the steward's body was found ;* he has put the words in the mouth of one of his characters. His design is to make it appear, in the *dénouement*, that the steward, Rudge, first murdered the gardener, then went to his master's chamber, murdered *him*, was interrupted by his (Rudge's) wife, whom he seized and held *by the wrist*, to prevent her giving the alarm —that he then, after possessing himself of the booty desired, returned to the gardener's room, exchanged clothes with him, put upon the corpse his own watch and ring, and secreted it where it was afterward discovered at so late a period that the features could not he identified.

The differences between our pre-conceived ideas, as here stated, and the actual facts of the story, will be found immaterial. The gardener was murdered, not before but after his master; and that Rudge's wife seized *him* by the wrist, instead of him seizing *her*, has so much the air of a mistake on the part of Mr. Dickens, that we can scarcely speak of our own version as erroneous. The grasp of a murderer's bloody hand on the wrist of a woman *enciente*, would have been more likely to produce the effect described (and this every one will allow) than

the grasp of the hand of the woman upon the wrist of the assassin. We may therefore say of our supposition, as Talleyrand said of some cockney's bad French, *que s'il ne soit pas Français, assurément donc il le doit être*—that if we did not rightly prophesy, yet, at least, our prophecy *should have been* right.

We are informed in the preface to "Barnaby Rudge" that "no account of the Gordon Riots having been introduced into any work of fiction, and the subject presenting very extraordinary and remarkable features," our author "was led to project this tale." But for this distinct announcement (for Mr. Dickens can scarcely have deceived himself) we should have looked upon the riots as altogether an after-thought. It is evident that they have no necessary connection with the story. In our digest, which carefully includes all *essentials* of the plot, we have dismissed the doings of the mob in a paragraph. The whole event of the drama would have proceeded as well without as with them. They have even the appearance of being *forcibly* introduced. In our compendium above, it will be seen that we emphasize several allusions to an interval of *five years*. The action is brought up to a certain point. The train of events is, so far, uninterrupted—nor is there any apparent need of interruption—yet all the characters are now thrown forward for a period of *five years*. And why? We ask in vain. Is it not to bestow upon the lovers a more decorous maturity of age? —for this is the only possible idea which suggests itself.

Edward Chester is already eight-and-twenty, and Emma Haredale would, in America at least, be upon the list of old maids. No—there is no such reason; nor does there appear to be any one more plausible than that, as it is now the year of our Lord 1775, an advance of five years will bring the *dramatis personæ* up to a very remarkable period, affording an admirable opportunity for their display—the period, in short, of the "No Popery" riots. This was the idea with which we were forcibly impressed in perusal, and which nothing less than Mr. Dickens' positive assurance to the contrary would have been sufficient to eradicate.

It is, perhaps, but one of a thousand instances of the disadvantages, both to the author and the public, of the present absurd fashion of periodical novel-writing, that our author had not sufficiently considered or determined upon *any* particular plot when he began the story now under review. In fact, we see, or fancy that we see, numerous traces of indecision—traces which a dexterous supervision of the complete work might have enabled him to erase. We have already spoken of the intermission of a lustrum. The opening speeches of old Chester are by far too *truly* gentlemanly for his subsequent character. The wife of Varden, also, is too wholesome a shrew to be converted into the quiet wife—the original design was to punish her. At page 16, we read thus—Solomon Daisy is telling his story:

"I put as good a face upon it as I could, and muffling

myself up, started out with a lighted lantern in one hand and the key of the church in the other"—at this point of the narrative, the dress of the strange man rustled as if he had turned to hear more distinctly.

Here the design is to call the reader's attention to a *point* in the tale; but no subsequent explanation is made. Again, a few lines below:

The houses were all shut up, and the folks in-doors, and perhaps there is only one man in the world who knows how dark it really was.

Here the intention is still more evident, but there is no result. Again, at page 54, the idiot draws Mr. Chester to the window, and directs his attention to the clothes hanging upon the lines in the yard:

"Look down," he said softly; "do you mark how they whisper in each other's ears, then dance and leap to make believe they are in sport? Do you see how they stop for a moment, when they think there is no one looking, and mutter among themselves again; and then how they roll and gambol, delighted with the mischief they 've been plotting? Look at 'em now! See how they whirl and plunge. And now they stop again, and whisper cautiously together—little thinking, mind, how often I have lain upon the ground and watched them. I say—what is it that they plot and hatch? Do you know?"

Upon perusal of these ravings, we at once supposed them to have allusion to some *real* plotting; and even

now we cannot force ourselves to believe them not so intended. They suggested the opinion that Haredale himself would be implicated in the murder, and that the counsellings alluded to might be those of that gentleman with Rudge. It is by no means impossible that some such conception wavered in the mind of the author. At page 32 we have a confirmation of our idea, when Varden endeavors to arrest the murderer in the house of his wife:

"Come back—come back!" exclaimed the woman, wrestling with and clasping him. "Do not touch him on your life. *He carries other lives beside his own.*"

The *dénouement* fails to account for this exclamation.

In the beginning of the story much emphasis is placed upon the *two* female servants of Haredale, and upon his journey to and from London, as well as upon his wife. We have merely said, in our digest, that he was a widower, italicizing the remark. All these other points are, in fact, singularly irrelevant, in the supposition that the original design has not undergone modification.

Again, at page 57, when Haredale talks of "his dismantled and beggared hearth," we cannot help fancying that the author had in view some different wrong, or series of wrongs, perpetrated by Chester, than any which appear in the end. This gentleman, too, takes extreme and frequent pains to acquire dominion over the rough Hugh;—this matter is particularly insisted upon by the novelist;—we look, of course, for some important result,

but the filching of a letter is nearly all that is accomplished. That Barnaby's delight in the desperate scenes of the rebellion is inconsistent with his horror of blood will strike every reader; and this inconsistency seems to be the consequence of the *after-thought* upon which we have already commented. In fact, the title of the work, the elaborate and pointed manner of the commencement, the impressive description of The Warren, and especially of Mrs. Rudge, go so far to show that Mr. Dickens has really deceived himself—that the soul of the plot, as originally conceived, was the murder of Haredale, with the subsequent discovery of the murderer in Rudge —but that this idea was afterward abandoned, or rather suffered to be merged in that of the Popish riots. The result has been most unfavorable. That which, of itself, would have proved highly effective, has been rendered nearly null by its situation. In the multitudinous outrage and horror of the Rebellion, the *one* atrocity is utterly whelmed and extinguished.

The reasons of this deflection from the first purpose appear to us self-evident. One of them we have already mentioned. The other is that our author discovered, when too late, that *he had anticipated, and thus rendered valueless, his chief effect.* This will be readily understood. The particulars of the assassination being withheld, the strength of the narrator is put forth, in the beginning of the story, to *whet curiosity* in respect to these particulars; and, so far, he is but in proper pursuance of his main de-

sign. But from this intention he unwittingly passes into the error of *exaggerating anticipation*. And error though it be, it is an error wrought with consummate skill. What, for example, could more vividly enhance our impression of the unknown horror enacted than the deep and enduring gloom of Haredale—than the Pilot's inborn awe of blood—or, especially, than the expression of countenance so imaginatively attributed to Mrs. Rudge—"the capacity for expressing terror—something only dimly seen, but never absent for a moment—the shadow of some look to which an instant of intense and most unutterable horror only could have given rise?" But it is a condition of the human fancy that the promises of such words are irredeemable. In the notice before mentioned we thus spoke upon this topic:

This is a conception admirably adapted to whet curiosity in respect to the character of that event which is hinted at as forming the basis of the story. But this observation should not fail to be made—that the anticipation must surpass the reality; that no matter how terrific be the circumstances which, in the *dénouement*, shall appear to have occasioned the expression of countenance worn habitually by Mrs. Rudge, still they will not be able to satisfy the mind of the reader. He will surely be disappointed. The skilful intimation of horror held out by the artist, produces an effect which will deprive his conclusion of all. These intimations—these dark hints of some uncertain evil—are often rhetorically praised as effective, but are only justly so praised where there is no *dénoue-*

ment whatever—where the reader's imagination is left to clear up the mystery for itself, and this is not the design of Mr. Dickens.

And, in fact, our author was not long in seeing his precipitancy. He had placed himself in a dilemma from which even his high genius could not extricate him. He at once shifts the main interest—and in truth we do not see what better he could have done. The reader's attention becomes absorbed in the riots, and he fails to observe that what should have been the true catastrophe of the novel is exceedingly feeble and ineffective.

A few cursory remarks:—Mr. Dickens fails peculiarly in *pure* narration. See, for example, page 296, where the connection of Hugh and Chester is detailed by Varden. See also in "The Curiosity Shop," where, when the result is fully known, so many words are occupied in explaining the relationship of the brothers. The effect of the present narrative might have been materially increased by confining the action within the limits of London. The "Notre Dâme" of Hugo affords a fine example of the force which can be gained by concentration, or unity of place. The unity of time is also sadly neglected, to no purpose, in "Barnaby Rudge." That Rudge should so long and so deeply feel the sting of conscience is inconsistent with his brutality. On page 15, the interval elapsing between the murder and Rudge's return, is variously stated at twenty-two and twenty-four years. It may be asked why the inmates of "The Warren" failed

to hear the alarm-bell which was heard by Solomon Daisy. The idea of persecution by being tracked, as by bloodhounds, from one spot of quietude to another, is a favorite one with Mr. Dickens. Its effect cannot be denied. The stain upon Barnaby's wrist, caused by fright in the mother at so late a period of gestation as one day before mature parturition, is shockingly at war with all medical experience. When Rudge, escaped from prison, unshackled, with money at command, is in agony at his wife's refusal to perjure herself for his salvation—is it not *queer* that he should demand any other salvation than lay in his heels?

Some of the conclusions of chapters—see pages 40 and 100—seem to have been written for the mere purpose of illustrating tail-pieces.

The leading idiosyncrasy of Mr. Dickens' remarkable humor, is to be found in his *translating the language of gesture, or action, or tone.* For example:

> The cronies nodded to each other, and Mr. Parkes remarked in an undertone, shaking his head meanwhile, *as who should say "let no man contradict me, for I won't believe him,"* that Willet was in amazing force to-night.

The riots form a series of vivid pictures never surpassed. At page 17, the road between London and the Maypole is described as a horribly rough and dangerous, and at page 97, as an uncommonly smooth and convenient, one. At page 116, how comes Chester in possession of the key of Mr. Rudge's vacated house?

Mr. Dickens' English is usually pure. His most remarkable error is that of employing the adverb "directly" in the sense of "as soon as." For example: "Directly he arrived, Rudge said," etc. Bulwer is uniformly guilty of the same blunder.

It is observable that so original a stylist as our author should occasionally lapse into a gross imitation of what, itself, is a gross imitation. We mean the manner of Lamb—a manner based in the Latin construction. For example:

> In summer-time its pumps suggest to thirsty idlers springs cooler and more sparkling and deeper than other wells; and as they trace the spillings of full pitchers on the heated ground, they snuff the freshness, and, sighing, cast sad looks toward the Thames, and think of baths and boats, and saunter on, despondent.

The wood-cut *designs* which accompany the edition before us are occasionally good. The copper engravings are pitiably ill-conceived and ill-drawn; and not only this, but in broad contradiction of the wood-designs and text.

There are many *coincidences* wrought into the narrative —those, for example, which relate to the nineteenth of March; the dream of Barnaby, respecting his father, at the very period when his father is actually in the house; and the dream of Haredale previous to his final meeting with Chester. These things are meant to *insinuate* a fatality which, very properly, is not expressed in plain

terms—but it is questionable whether the story derives more in ideality from their introduction, than it might have gained of verisimilitude from their omission.

The *dramatis personæ* sustain the high fame of Mr. Dickens as a delineator of character. Miggs, the disconsolate handmaiden of Varden; Tappertit, his chivalrous apprentice, Mrs. Varden, herself; and Dennis, a hangman, may be regarded as original caricatures, of the highest merit as such. Their traits are founded in acute observation of nature, but are exaggerated to the utmost admissible extent. Miss Haredale and Edward Chester are commonplaces—no effort has been made in their behalf. Joe Willet is a naturally drawn country youth. Stagg is a mere make-weight. Gashford and Gordon are truthfully copied. Dolly Varden is truth itself. Haredale, Rudge and Mrs. Rudge, are impressive only through the circumstances which surround them. Sir John Chester is, of course, not original, but is a vast improvement upon all his predecessors—his heartlessness is rendered somewhat too amusing, and his end too much that of a man of honor. Hugh is a noble conception. His fierce exultation in his animal powers; his subserviency to the smooth Chester; his mirthful contempt and patronage of Tappertit, and his *brutal* yet firm courage in the hour of death —form a picture to be set in diamonds. Old Willet is not surpassed by any character even among those of Dickens. He is nature itself—yet a step further would have placed him in the class of caricatures. His combined conceit and

obtusity are indescribably droll, and his peculiar misdirected energy when aroused, is one of the most exquisite touches in all humorous painting. We shall never forget how heartily we laughed at his shaking Solomon Daisy and threatening to put him behind the fire, because the unfortunate little man was too much frightened to articulate. Varden is one of those free, jovial, honest fellows, at charity with all mankind, whom our author is so fond of depicting. And lastly, Barnaby, the hero of the tale—in him we have been somewhat disappointed. We have already said that his delight in the atrocities of the rebellion is at variance with his horror of blood. But this horror of blood is *inconsequential;* and of this we complain. Strongly insisted upon in the beginning of the narrative, it produces no adequate result. And here how fine an opportunity has Mr. Dickens missed! The conviction of the assassin, after the lapse of twenty-two years, might easily have been brought about through his son's mysterious awe of blood—*an awe created in the unborn by the assassination itself*—and this would have been one of the finest possible embodiments of the idea which we are accustomed to attach to "poetical justice." The raven, too, intensely amusing as it is, might have been made, more than we now see it, a portion of the conception of the fantastic Barnaby. Its croakings might have been *prophetically* heard in the course of the drama. Its character might have performed, in regard to that of the idiot, much the same part as does, in music, the accompaniment

in respect to the air. Each might have been distinct. Each might have differed remarkably from the other. Yet between them there might have been wrought an analogical resemblance, and although each might have existed apart, they might have formed together a whole which would have been imperfect in the absence of either.

From what we have here said—and, perhaps, said without due deliberation (for alas! the hurried duties of the journalist preclude it)—there will not be wanting those who will accuse us of a mad design to detract from the pure fame of the novelist. But to such we merely say in the language of heraldry, "ye should wear a plain point sanguine in your arms." If this be understood, well; if not, well again. There lives no man feeling a deeper reverence for genius than ourself. If we have not dwelt so especially upon the high merits as upon the trivial defects of "Barnaby Rudge" we have already given our reasons for the omission, and these reasons will be sufficiently understood by all whom we care to understand them. The work before us is not, we think, equal to the tale which preceded it; but there are few—very few others to which we consider it inferior. Our chief objection has not, perhaps, been so distinctly stated as we could wish. That this fiction, or indeed that any fiction written by Mr. Dickens, should be based in the excitement and maintenance of curiosity we look upon as a misconception, on the part of the writer, of his own very great yet very peculiar powers. He has done this thing well, to be sure—he would do any

thing well in comparison with the herd of his contemporaries —but he has not done it so thoroughly well as his high and just reputation would demand. We think that the whole book has been an effort to him—solely through the nature of its design. He has been smitten with an untimely desire for a novel path. The idiosyncrasy of his intellect would lead him, naturally, into the most fluent and simple style of narration. In tales of ordinary sequence he may and will long reign triumphant. He has a *talent* for all things, but no positive *genius* for *adaptation*, and still less for that metaphysical art in which the souls of all *mysteries* lie. "Caleb Williams" is a far less noble work than "The Old Curiosity Shop"; but Mr. Dickens could no more have constructed the one than Mr. Godwin could have dreamed of the other.

LETTER TO B——.*

IT has been said that a good critique on a poem may be written by one who is no poet himself. This, according to *your* idea and *mine* of poetry, I feel to be false—the less poetical the critic, the less just the critique, and the converse. On this account, and because there are but few B——'s in the world, I would be as much ashamed of the world's good opinion as proud of your own. Another than yourself might here observe: "Shakespeare is in possession of the world's good opinion, and yet Shakespeare is the greatest of poets. It appears then that the world judge correctly, why should you be ashamed of their favorable judgment?" The difficulty lies in the interpretation of the word "judgment" or "opinion." The opinion is the world's, truly, but it may be called theirs as a man would call a book his, having bought it; he did not write the book, but it is his; they did not origi-

* Printed, with the following note, in the second volume of the *Southern Literary Messenger*: "These detached passages form part of the preface to a small volume printed some years ago for private circulation. They have vigor and much originality—but of course we shall not be called upon to endorse all the writer's opinions."

nate the opinion, but it is theirs. A fool, for example, thinks Shakespeare a great poet—yet the fool has never read Shakespeare. But the fool's neighbor, who is a step higher on the Andes of the mind, whose head (that is to say, his more exalted thought) is too far above the fool to be seen or understood, but whose feet (by which I mean his every-day actions) are sufficiently near to be discerned, and by means of which that superiority is ascertained, which *but* for them would never have been discovered—this neighbor asserts that Shakespeare is a great poet—the fool believes him, and it is henceforth his *opinion*. This neighbor's own opinion has, in like manner, been adopted from one above *him*, and so, ascendingly, to a few gifted individuals, who kneel around the summit, beholding, face to face, the master spirit who stands upon the pinnacle. * * *

You are aware of the great barrier in the path of an American writer. He is read, if at all, in preference to the combined and established wit of the world. I say established; for it is with literature as with law or empire—an established name is an estate in tenure, or a throne in possession. Besides, one might suppose that books, like their authors, improve by travel—their having crossed the sea is, with us, so great a distinction. Our antiquaries abandon time for distance; our very fops glance from the binding to the bottom of the title-page, where the mystic characters which spell London, Paris, or Genoa, are precisely so many letters of recommendation. * * *

I mentioned just now a vulgar error as regards criticism. I think the notion that no poet can form a correct estimate of his own writings is another. I remarked before, that in proportion to the poetical talent, would be the justice of the critique upon poetry. Therefore, a bad poet would, I grant, make a false critique, and his self-love would infallibly bias his little judgment in his favor; but a poet, who is indeed a poet, could not, I think, fail of making a just critique. Whatever should be deducted on the score of self-love, might be replaced on account of his intimate acquaintance with the subject; in short, we have more instances of false criticism than of just, where one's own writings are the test, simply because we have more bad poets than good. There are of course many objections to what I say: Milton is a great example of the contrary; but his opinion with respect to the "Paradise Regained," is by no means fairly ascertained. By what trivial circumstances men are often led to assert what they do not really believe! Perhaps an inadvertent word has descended to posterity. But, in fact, the "Paradise Regained" is little, if at all, inferior to the "Paradise Lost," and is only supposed so to be, because men do not like epics, whatever they may say to the contrary, and reading those of Milton in their natural order, are too much wearied with the first to derive any pleasure from the second.

I dare say Milton preferred "Comus" to either—if so—justly. * * *

As I am speaking of poetry, it will not be amiss to

touch slightly upon the most singular heresy in its modern history—the heresy of what is called, very foolishly, the Lake School. Some years ago I might have been induced, by an occasion like the present, to attempt a formal refutation of their doctrine; at present it would be a work of supererogation. The wise must bow to the wisdom of such men as Coleridge and Southey, but being wise, have laughed at poetical theories so prosaically exemplified.

Aristotle, with singular assurance, has declared poetry the most philosophical of all writings*—but it required a Wordsworth to pronounce it the most metaphysical. He seems to think that the end of poetry is, or should be, instruction—yet it is a truism that the end of our existence is happiness; if so, the end of every separate part of our existence, every thing connected with our existence, should be still—happiness. Therefore the end of instruction should be happiness; and happiness is another name for pleasure; therefore the end of instruction should be pleasure; yet we see the above-mentioned opinion implies precisely the reverse.

To proceed: *ceteris paribus*, he who pleases is of more importance to his fellow-men than he who instructs, since utility is happiness, and pleasure is the end already obtained, which instruction is merely the means of obtaining.

I see no reason, then, why our metaphysical poets should plume themselves so much on the utility of their

* *Spoudiotaton kai philosophikotaton genos.*

works, unless indeed they refer to instruction with eternity in view; in which case, sincere respect for their piety would not allow me to express my contempt for their judgment; contempt which it would be difficult to conceal, since their writings are professedly to be understood by the few, and it is the many who stand in need of salvation. In such case I should no doubt be tempted to think of the Devil in "Melmoth," who labors indefatigably through three octavo volumes to accomplish the destruction of one or two souls, while any common devil would have demolished one or two thousand. * * *

Against the subtleties which would make poetry a study —not a passion—it becomes the metaphysician to reason —but the poet to protest. Yet Wordsworth and Coleridge are men in years; the one imbued in contemplation from his childhood, the other a giant in intellect and learning. The diffidence, then, with which I venture to dispute their authority would be overwhelming, did I not feel, from the bottom of my heart, that learning has little to do with the imagination—intellect with the passions—or age with poetry. * * *

> "Trifles, like straws, upon the surface flow,
> He who would search for pearls must dive below,"

are lines which have done much mischief. As regards the greater truths, men oftener err by seeking them at the bottom than at the top; the depth lies in the huge abysses where wisdom is sought—not in the palpable palaces where she is found. The ancients were not always

right in hiding the goddess in a well: witness the light which Bacon has thrown upon philosophy; witness the principles of our divine faith—that moral mechanism by which the simplicity of a child may overbalance the wisdom of a man.

We see an instance of Coleridge's liability to err, in his "Biographia Literaria"—professedly his literary life and opinions, but, in fact, a treatise *de omni scibili et quibusdam aliis*. He goes wrong by reason of his very profundity, and of his error we have a natural type in the contemplation of a star. He who regards it directly and intensely sees, it is true, the star, but it is the star without a ray; while he who surveys it less inquisitively is conscious of all for which the star is useful to us below—its brilliancy and its beauty. * * *

As to Wordsworth, I have no faith in him. That he had, in youth, the feelings of a poet, I believe—for there are glimpses of extreme delicacy in his writings, (and delicacy is the poet's own kingdom—his *El Dorado*), but they have the appearance of a better day recollected; and glimpses, at best, are little evidence of present poetic fire—we know that a few straggling flowers spring up daily in the crevices of the glacier.

He was to blame in wearing away his youth in contemplation with the end of poetizing in his manhood. With the increase of his judgment the light which should make it apparent has faded away. His judgment, consequently, is too correct. This may not be understood; but the old

Goths of Germany would have understood it, who used to debate matters of importance to their State twice, once when drunk, and once when sober: sober, that they might not be deficient in formality; drunk, lest they should be destitute of vigor.

The long wordy discussions by which he tries to reason us into admiration of his poetry speak very little in his favor; they are full of such assertions as this (I have opened one of his volumes at random): "Of genius the only proof is the act of doing well what is worthy to be done, and what was never done before,"—indeed! then it follows that in doing what is *un*worthy to be done, or what *has* been done before, no genius can be evinced; yet the picking of pockets is an unworthy act, pockets have been picked time immemorial, and Barrington, the pickpocket, in point of genius, would have thought hard of a comparison with William Wordsworth, the poet.

Again,—in estimating the merit of certain poems, whether they be Ossian's or McPherson's, can surely be of little consequence, yet, in order to prove their worthlessness, Mr. W. has expended many pages in the controversy. *Tantæne animis?* Can great minds descend to such absurdity? But worse still: that he may bear down every argument in favor of these poems, he triumphantly drags forward a passage, in his abomination of which he expects the reader to sympathize. It is the beginning of the epic poem "*Temora.*" "The blue waves of Ullin roll in light; the green hills are covered with

day; trees shake their dusky heads in the breeze." And this—this gorgeous, yet simple imagery, where all is alive and panting with immortality—this, William Wordsworth, the author of "Peter Bell," has *selected* for his contempt. We shall see what better he, in his own person, has to offer. Imprimis:

> And now she 's at the pony's head,
> And now she 's at the pony's tail,
> On that side now, and now on this,
> And almost stifled her with bliss—
> A few sad tears does Betty shed,
> She pats the pony where or when
> She knows not: happy Betty Foy!
> Oh, Johnny! never mind the Doctor!

Secondly:

> The dew was falling fast, the—stars began to blink,
> I heard a voice; it said: Drink, pretty creature, drink;
> And, looking o'er the hedge, be—fore me I espied
> A snow-white mountain lamb, with a—maiden at its side.
> No other sheep were near, the lamb was all alone,
> And by a slender cord was—tether'd to a stone.

Now, we have no doubt this is all true; we *will* believe it; indeed, we will, Mr. W. Is it sympathy for the sheep you wish to excite? I love a sheep from the bottom of my heart. * * *

But there *are* occasions, dear B——, there are occasions when even Wordsworth is reasonable. Even Stamboul, it is said, shall have an end, and the most unlucky blunders must come to a conclusion. Here is an extract from his preface:

"Those who have been accustomed to the phraseology of modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to a

conclusion, (*impossible!*) will, no doubt, have to struggle with feelings of awkwardness (ha! ha! ha!); they will look round for poetry (ha! ha! ha! ha!), and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts have been permitted to assume that title." Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

Yet, let not Mr. W. despair; he has given immortality to a wagon, and the bee Sophocles has transmitted to eternity a sore toe, and dignified a tragedy with a chorus of turkeys. * * *

Of Coleridge I cannot speak but with reverence. His towering intellect! his gigantic power! He is one more evidence of the fact "que la plupart des sectes ont raison dans une bonne partie de ce qu'elles avancent, mais non pas en ce qu'elles nient." He has imprisoned his own conceptions by the barrier he has erected against those of others. It is lamentable to think that such a mind should be buried in metaphysics, and, like the Nyctanthes, waste its perfume upon the night alone. In reading his poetry, I tremble, like one who stands upon a volcano, conscious, from the very darkness bursting from the crater, of the fire and the light that are weltering below.

What is Poetry?—Poetry! that Proteus-like idea, with as many appellations as the nine-titled Corcyra! "Give me," I demanded of a scholar some time ago,—"give me a definition of poetry." "Très-volontiers"; and he proceeded to his library, brought me a Dr. Johnson, and overwhelmed me with a definition. Shade of the im-

mortal Shakespeare! I imagine to myself the scowl of your spiritual eye upon the profanity of that scurrilous Ursa Major. Think of poetry, dear B——; think of poetry, and then think of Dr. Samuel Johnson! Think of all that is airy and fairy-like, and then of all that is hideous and unwieldy; think of his huge bulk, the Elephant! and then—and then think of the "Tempest"—the "Midsummer Night's Dream"—Prospero—Oberon—and Titania! * * *

A poem, in my opinion, is opposed to a work of science by having, for its *immediate* object, pleasure, not truth; to romance, by having, for its object, an *indefinite* instead of a *definite* pleasure, being a poem only so far as this object is attained; romance presenting perceptible images with definite, poetry with *in*definite sensations, to which end music is an *essential*, since the comprehension of sweet sound is our most indefinite, conception. Music, when combined with a pleasurable idea, is poetry; music, without the idea, is simply music; the idea, without the music, is prose, from its very definitiveness.

What was meant by the invective against him who had no music in his soul? * * *

To sum up this long rigmarole, I have, dear B——, what you, no doubt, perceive, for the metaphysical poets, *as* poets, the most sovereign contempt. That they have followers proves nothing—

> No Indian prince has to his palace
> More followers than a thief to the gallows.